



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 3 Nov 2021

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	11/03 Lebanon 'worthless' stacks of cash
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanese-carry-worthless-stacks-cash-after-currency-crash-2021-11-03/
GIST	<p>BEIRUT, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Restaurant owner Antoine Haddad has been in business for over 35 years but says he is running out of hope as Lebanon struggles with one of the deepest financial crises of modern times.</p> <p>The Lebanese pound lost around 90% of its value in the past two years, propelling three quarters of the population into poverty.</p> <p>For Haddad, the difference between this and other crises that Lebanon has experienced, including the 1975-1990 civil war, is that it feels like there is no end in sight.</p> <p>"Previously, you had hope that: 'tomorrow the war will end, we do this and that and go back to where we were', but this time there is no hope," he said.</p> <p>"They (those in power) promised us we would have plenty of money in our hands, and we indeed have a lot of it to play with," he said sarcastically referring to the growing stacks of banknotes needed for even basic purchases after the currency drop.</p> <p>Haddad, whose small restaurant has been in business since 1984, said he can only buy 10% of the olive oil he used to buy with the same money.</p> <p>The government, facing an election in March as it tries to secure an IMF recovery plan, has tripled transport allowance for employees to alleviate some of the pain but most salaries, including the minimum wage, have not been adjusted.</p> <p>Pub-owner Moussa Yaakoub is also taken aback by the amount of cash he needs to run his business.</p> <p>"I have never before held in my hands this amount of money," he said as he counted some 10 million pounds, worth \$6,600 at the pre-crisis rate but now less than \$500 at the market rate.</p> <p>That much money used to cover a pub's operation for months, but now only pays a couple of bills, he said.</p> <p>Grocery store owner Roni Bou Rached has changed the way he stores money in his cash drawer now that smaller notes are used less, and coins are almost non-existent.</p> <p>"I am hesitant how much to carry in my pocket when I leave. I sometimes carry 1 million or 1.5 million ... but I mean, they are worthless," he said.</p> <p>A single restaurant bill now could amount to sums higher than some workers' earnings.</p> <p>"God help those who do not have an income or are not able to work around things," Ali Jaber, a private sector employee, said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Slovenia highest daily number cases
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/slovenia-records-highest-daily-number-covid-cases-2021-11-03/
GIST	<p>ZAGREB, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Slovenia registered a record high 3,456 COVID-19 infections on Tuesday, or 44.7% of the number of people tested, the state health institute said, as medical experts suggest tighter restrictions to rein in the pandemic.</p> <p>Currently there are 29,354 active COVID-19 cases in the small Alpine state of some two million people. There are 1.12 million fully vaccinated people, or 53% of the overall population.</p>

	<p>Medical experts this week proposed tightening curbs on gatherings, including shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants and work from home for public sector employees, national television reported.</p> <p>The government is expected to discuss the pandemic on Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 More China provinces widespread outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/china-s-latest-delta-outbreak-its-most-widespread-since-wuhan/ar-AAQgiAh
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- More provinces in China are fighting Covid-19 than at any time since the deadly pathogen first emerged in Wuhan in 2019.</p> <p>The highly-infectious delta variant is hurtling across the country despite the increasingly aggressive measures that officials have enacted in a bid to thwart it. More than 600 locally-transmitted infections have been found in 19 of 31 provinces in the latest outbreak in the world's second-largest economy.</p> <p>China reported 93 new local cases on Wednesday, and 11 asymptomatic infections. Three more provinces detected cases: central Chongqing, Henan, and Jiangsu on the eastern coast.</p> <p>Officials in China say they are committed to maintaining a so-called Covid Zero approach, even though flare-ups are coming faster, spreading further and evading many of the measures that previously controlled the virus. The drastic responses needed to wipe out the delta variant have led several other countries that had been pursuing elimination of the coronavirus, including Singapore and Australia, to shift focus and instead rely on high vaccination rates to be able to live with the virus as endemic.</p> <p>Beijing reported nine infections on Wednesday, including one that was earlier reported as asymptomatic. The capital city's total case count in the current wave now stands at 38, a small tally compared to the situation in other parts of the world but the highest for Beijing since a pre-delta outbreak last January and February. Ticket sales into the city were halted for trains from 123 stations in 23 regions, officials said at a government briefing.</p> <p>Government officials quarantined children in two Beijing schools after a teacher was found to be infected. Another 16 were shut because their staff might have been present at the vaccination venue where the infected teacher recently received a booster shot.</p> <p>China's Ministry of Commerce urged residents on Tuesday to stock up on necessities for the fall and winter to be prepared for future outbreaks that could trigger snap lockdowns.</p> <p>Chongqing, a municipality new to the latest outbreak, initiated mass testing overnight as officials aim to act decisively during the "golden 24 hours" after the virus is first detected. Changzhou, a city in Jiangsu province, has halted school from Wednesday for at least three days, with students turning to online classes.</p> <p>China could go much further in its bid to keep out Covid-19. More than 30,000 people were tested at Shanghai Disneyland on Sunday, with visitors kept inside the park until nearly midnight after one infected person was found to have been there. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of residents in the remote southeastern city of Ruili on the border with high-risk Myanmar have been banned from leaving for months.</p> <p>China's top health expert, Zhong Nanshan, is confident the country can contain the current outbreak in a month's time, according to an interview with state media CGTN.</p> <p>Despite the global trend of countries learning to coexist with the virus, Zhong, who helped the government quell many outbreaks since the pandemic began, defended China's approach, which has been criticized for</p>

	its impact on the economy. While the restrictions necessary to control the virus are costly, opening up the country and allowing the pathogen to spread would exact an even steeper price, he said.
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HEADLINE	11/03 Economists warn: inflation sticking around
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/inflation-federal-reserve-transitory-economists-long-term/
GIST	<p>The Federal Reserve has stuck to its characterization of this year's higher inflation as a "transitory" issue. But after six months of higher prices touching everything from food to energy prices, some economists say the phenomenon appears to be sticking around — and could last well into 2022.</p> <p>"I think probably another word is needed," noted Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. financial economist at Oxford Economics. Although, she added wryly, "transitory" could simply mean "it won't persist in perpetuity."</p> <p>Such price hikes are sending shocks through household budgets, following almost a decade when inflation rose between 1% to 2% annually. But in 2021, inflation is forecast to stand close to 5%, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. That's souring Americans on the nation's financial outlook, with more than 6 in 10 calling the economy poor, according to polling from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.</p> <p>Unfortunately, inflation isn't likely to return to its pre-2021 levels within the next few months, economists now predict.</p> <p>"Our sense is that the inflation and price increases will get worse in the near term before they get better," Bostjancic noted. Her forecast is that headline inflation — or inflation including gas and food prices — will stand at 5.3% in the first three months of 2022, but may start to ease in the second quarter.</p> <p>Goldman Sachs analysts, meanwhile, forecast inflation will return to about 2% — but not until late 2022.</p> <p>About half of Americans say they now expect the economy to worsen in the next year, compared with just 30% who think it will get better. In the AP-NORC poll conducted in February and March, the situation was reversed: 44% expected the economy to get better in the year ahead and just 32% said it would get worse.</p> <p>With inflation running well above its recent norm, all eyes are now on the Federal Reserve, which on Wednesday is expected to announce it will begin winding down its bond-buying stimulus program.</p> <p>But economists say they will also be listening for whether the Fed plans to hasten plans to boost interest rates from their current level of almost zero — a move that could help tame inflation.</p> <p>For some consumers, the inflationary spike brings back memories of another era when inflation was high.</p> <p>"I grew up in the 1970s and I remember it was hard for my parents to make ends meet," Nadine Christian, 55, told the Associated Press. "It's not quite as bad as it was back then but I feel like any day we could go off the rails."</p> <p>"Pent-up consumer demand"</p> <p>Inflation spiked higher this year due to the confluence of several pandemic trends, economists say. First, the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in early 2021 spurred pent-up demand from consumers, millions of whom were flush with cash due to stimulus checks and extra unemployment aid.</p> <p>But at the same time, the U.S. workforce hasn't fully recovered from the pandemic. There are still 3.2 million fewer workers today than in February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the economy. Among the businesses impacted by the labor force shortage are those in the supply chain — transportation companies, warehouses and other businesses that help move goods around the U.S.</p>

That's created what Bostjancic calls "sticky supply-driven inflation."

"There was huge pent-up consumer demand, and demand came back sharply, and supply couldn't keep up," she added.

But there's a risk if the Fed boosts interest rates more quickly than expected, Bostjancic noted. "You could have a double-jeopardy risk that they raise rates now to combat inflation, but that it kicks in just as supply comes online and demand moderates," she said.

Utilities, food, paper goods

Among the businesses impacted by inflation are restaurants, which are experiencing higher demand from consumers just as they're also facing higher costs for everything from food to "some items in the middle of the P&L (profit & loss): utilities, paper goods, plates, small wares," said Jim Balis, managing director at restaurant investor CapitalSpring's Strategic Operations Group.

Balis, whose company is invested in 60 different restaurant brands — although he can't disclose which ones — noted that their businesses saw an uptick in demand as vaccinations spread across the nation. Restaurant owners believed that workers would follow by returning to the labor market after the pandemic unemployment benefits expired in September, but that hasn't happened, Balis added.

"There probably is some percentage that has said, 'I want to go back to work, but under different terms or conditions' — maybe they want to work in a fulfillment center, or younger populations like companies with a cause," he noted.

And restaurants are also facing competition for workers, both from other industries that pay higher wages as well as rival dining establishments, he noted. That's prompting his company's restaurants to boost wages, which Balis estimates have risen by about 7% from a year earlier.

So far, he said, workers aren't arguing they need higher wages due to inflation — restaurants are offering more to simply compete with rival employers, Balis said. Economists, meanwhile, are keeping their eyes on the potential for a so-called wage-price spiral, or when rising prices create pressure on wages, which then spirals as production costs rise due to higher wages, and so on.

As costs of goods and payroll increases, Balis says his restaurants are boosting menu prices to maintain margins. So far, consumers aren't blinking, he added.

"Fortunately, knock on wood, we have been able to [raise] prices to offset these pressures to protect margins," he said. "If there was ever a time the consumer was tolerant of those price increases, it is now."

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HEADLINE	11/02 Fire breaks out Ballard homeless camp
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/ballard-encampment-fire-breaks-out-voters-drop-off-ballots/IC2XOYQ4PVE3NLILRYVDFPZO/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — This election, voters are making clear that homelessness is their top issue. No matter who they voted for, voters say they are unhappy with the city's current homelessness response.</p> <p>"Increased crime and homelessness," said Crystal Rutherford, a Seattle voter, about her top concerns.</p> <p>"Things with the unhoused people who are in Seattle. Having access to equitable housing," said Meena Mahmood, another Seattle voter.</p> <p>Next to the Ballard drop box, unhoused neighbors camp feet away. The drop box is the busiest location in King County.</p>

Across the street, about 40 more tents line the Ballard Commons. While voters were dropping off ballots on Election Day, an encampment fire erupted around noon.

Voter Thomas Street says he knows people who are staying at the camp and says seeing the fire break out – particularly on Election Day — was tough.

“It’s painful. Because people here they need help,” Street said. “That was a very dangerous fire. I saw it when it started, an explosion. Somebody made a mistake probably trying to keep warm,” he said.

“The kids in this neighborhood, they deserve this park. Every park. A person should have a roof over their head. There’s too much money in this city for this to be happening,” Street said.

KIRO7 asked both mayoral candidates about the Ballard Commons camp being right next to a ballot drop box.

“That’s completely unacceptable! That is a prime example of where people need to be moved out of encampments around playground and into housing, and we have to have a sense of urgency,” said Bruce Harrell, Seattle mayoral candidate.

“You can vote in a lot of different ways- the ballot drop box is certainly one way, but the other ways is you can just put it in your mail box,” said Lorena González, Seattle mayoral candidate. “First thing I’m going to be focused on, on day one, is homelessness,” she said.

The candidates are both pledging to help the unhoused — though they have dramatically different plans.

Some voters are skeptical of both candidates.

“I’m going to be honest, it was tough. There’s a lot of promises — people are tired of promises,” Street said about deciding who to vote for on his ballot.

Others are hopeful their vote will make a positive difference.

“Having someone who will take Seattle in a better direction than we are in right now,” Mahmood said.

One tent burned in the fire at the Commons, and no one was hurt. The Seattle Fire Department said multiple propane tanks were in the area, but none ignited. One gas can was on fire that fire crews extinguished.

Current Mayor Jenny Durkan’s office said crews have been conducting extensive outreach work at the Ballard Commons camp and in the area over the past three weeks. Twenty-one people have been referred to shelter, including 17 to the new Rosie’s Tiny House Village.

The city says there is no date to clear out the camp, but outreach is ongoing, and it said the camp is a “top priority” for Seattle.

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HEADLINE	11/03 CDC: suicides decline 2019-2020
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2021/11/03/covid19-pandemic-suicide-rate-2020-declined-cdc/2301635874284/
GIST	<p>Nov. 2 (UPI) -- The suicide rate in the United States declined from 2019 to 2020, according to data released Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>This is despite 2020 marking the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and related social distancing measures designed to limit disease spread, which many experts thought might increase the suicide rate.</p>

"The findings are somewhat surprising, in that the pandemic increased many of the risk factors that are linked with suicidal behavior, such as loneliness, substance use, stress and financial difficulties," psychiatry scholar Brandon Nichter told UPI in an email.

There were an estimated 46,000 deaths by suicide across the country last year, down 3% from just under 48,000 in 2019, the data showed.

Only three months in 2020 had higher numbers of deaths by suicide than the corresponding months the year before, the agency said.

These were January and February -- the months immediately before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic - as well as November, according to the CDC.

"One potential explanation for these decreases is that they reflect a 'pulling together phenomenon,' which can occur during times of national crises, where social cohesion increases and communities are drawn together," said Nichter, a visiting scholar at the University of California, San Diego.

The suicide rate for males dropped by 2% from 2019 through 2020, though it increased by 3% to 5% among Black and Hispanic men and by 8% for men of American Indian or Alaska Native descent over the same period.

Meanwhile, the suicide rate among females fell 8%, and it declined across all racial and ethnic groups, according to the agency.

The new CDC figures are based on provisional estimates for 2020 using 99% of all 2020 death records received and processed by the National Center for Health Statistics as of May 19, 2021.

As a result, they are subject to change, given that reporting of deaths by suicide can be delayed due to investigations regarding the cause and circumstances surrounding them, the agency said.

In addition, the numbers of suicides for Asian people, American Indians and Alaska Natives and Hispanic people may be affected by misclassification of race on death certificates.

"Significant racial and ethnic health and economic disparities existed before the pandemic, and it is clear that these disparities have only been widened by the ongoing pandemic," said Nichter, who was not part of the CDC analysis.

"At this point, we need better national data that examines the specific factors that led to these increases among communities of color," he said.

However, despite the decline from 2019 to 2020, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, and it is likely remain so, "given the surge in firearm sales during the pandemic," psychologist Aaron J. Kivisto told UPI in an email.

"It should be easier for people to access quality mental healthcare when they're in crisis than to purchase a gun," said Kivisto, an associate professor of clinical psychology at the University of Indianapolis, who was also not part of the CDC analysis.

However, "until this is the reality, we're going to have a suicide problem in our country," he said.

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HEADLINE	11/03 Hong Kong: 'secessionist' found guilty
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/former-leader-hong-kong-pro-independence-group-found-guilty-secession-2021-11-03/

GIST	<p>HONG KONG, Nov 3 (Reuters) - A Hong Kong court ruled on Wednesday that the former leader of pro-independence group Studentlocalism was guilty of secession under the city's sweeping national security law, as well as money laundering, following a plea bargain with the prosecution.</p> <p>Tony Chung, 20, was charged with the offences in October last year and denied bail. Local media reported at the time he was taken away along with two others from a coffee shop close to the U.S. consulate by unidentified men and was believed to be preparing for an asylum application.</p> <p>Chung entered a plea bargain, admitting guilt on the charge of secession and one count of money laundering and pleading not guilty to a sedition charge and another money laundering accusation.</p> <p>Prosecutor Ivan Cheung said he acted as an administrator for the Facebook pages of the U.S. branch of Studentlocalism and an organisation called the Initiative Independence Party.</p> <p>Pro-independence T-shirts, flags and books were also seized from his home, the prosecutor said. The money laundering charge is related to donations he received via PayPal.</p> <p>"I have a clear conscience," Chung said in his plea.</p> <p>District Court Judge Stanley Chan said the sentence will be announced on Nov. 23.</p> <p>Like other anti-government organisations, Studentlocalism disbanded before Beijing imposed the security law in June 2020, to punish anything it deems as subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces with up to life in prison.</p> <p>The vast majority of Hong Kong people do not support independence, but any mention of the idea is anathema to Beijing.</p> <p>Since the enactment of the law, Hong Kong has taken a swift authoritarian turn, with most democratic politicians now in jail or in self-exile, dozens of civil society organisations folding, and international rights groups leaving the city. read more</p> <p>Chinese and Hong Kong authorities deny the security law tramples individual rights and say the legislation was necessary to restore stability after mass protests in 2019 when millions took to the streets over many months.</p> <p>The former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997 with the promise of a high degree of autonomy, which democracy activists and Western governments say was broken -- an allegation China vehemently denies.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Iran warns: nuclear talks could fail
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/iran-warns-nuclear-talks-would-fail-unless-biden-provides-guarantees-2021-11-03/
GIST	<p>DUBAI, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Negotiations to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers will fail unless U.S. President Joe Biden can guarantee that Washington will not again abandon the pact, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council said on Wednesday.</p> <p>"The U.S. President, lacking authority, is not ready to give guarantees. If the current status quo continues, the result of negotiations is clear," Ali Shamkhani said in a tweet.</p> <p>Iran is expected to give an exact date this week for the resumption of talks with the powers, scheduled for end of November according to Iranian top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri-Kani.</p>

	<p>In April, Iran and six powers started talks in Vienna to reinstate the deal, which then-U.S. President Donald Trump ditched three years ago before reimposing sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. However, the talks were put on hold after Iran's presidential election in June that brought anti-Western hardliner Ebrahim Raisi to power.</p> <p>A main disagreement in Vienna has been over Iran's requirement for the United States to give guarantees that it would not renege on the nuclear agreement in the future.</p> <p>The United States and European powers have urged Iran to return to negotiations, warning that time is running out as the Islamic Republic's uranium enrichment programme is advancing well beyond the limits set by the nuclear pact.</p> <p>In reaction to Trump's reimposition of sanctions, Tehran breached the deal by rebuilding stockpiles of enriched uranium, refining it to higher fissile purity and installing advanced centrifuges to speed up output.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 UK official: Christmas may be difficult
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/covid-pandemic-britain-is-not-over-hard-months-come-deputy-medical-officer-says-2021-11-03/
GIST	<p>LONDON, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Christmas may be difficult as the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, England's deputy chief medical officer warned on Wednesday, urging people to behave with caution and come forward for booster shots.</p> <p>Britain reported 293 deaths from COVID-19 on Tuesday, the highest daily figure since March, and there have been an average of around 40,000 new cases each day in recent weeks.</p> <p>Prime Minister Boris Johnson lifted restrictions in England in July, and has said he plans to cope with COVID over the winter by relying on vaccinations rather than mandating masks or lockdowns.</p> <p>"Too many people believe that this pandemic is now over. I personally feel there are some hard months to come in the winter and it is not over," Jonathan Van-Tam told BBC TV, adding that behaviour and the uptake of booster shots would determine how tough winter would be.</p> <p>"Christmas and indeed all of the darker winter months are potentially going to be problematic."</p> <p>Johnson has cited Britain's success in the initial vaccination rollout as he lifted restrictions, but a slower rollout of boosters means that for many vulnerable people, immunity could be waning.</p> <p>The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has said that taking action now could reduce the need for tougher measures later.</p> <p>Jeremy Farrar, director of Wellcome, said he had stepped down from SAGE to focus on his work at the health charity, but added the situation was still worrying.</p> <p>"The Covid-19 crisis is a long way from over," he said in a statement.</p> <p>"The high levels of transmission seen in the UK remain concerning, but I stepped down as a participant of SAGE knowing ministers had been provided with most of the key science advice needed over the winter months."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Scientists: beginning of end for pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/country-by-country-scientists-eye-beginning-an-end-covid-19-pandemic-2021-11-03/

CHICAGO, Nov 3 (Reuters) - As the devastating Delta variant surge eases in many regions of the world, scientists are charting when, and where, COVID-19 will transition to an endemic disease in 2022 and beyond, according to Reuters interviews with over a dozen leading disease experts.

They expect that the first countries to emerge from the pandemic will have had some combination of high rates of vaccination and natural immunity among people who were infected with the coronavirus, such as the United States, the UK, Portugal and India. But they warn that SARS-CoV-2 remains an unpredictable virus that is mutating as it spreads through unvaccinated populations.

None would completely rule out what some called a "doomsday scenario," in which the virus mutates to the point that it evades hard-won immunity. Yet they expressed increasing confidence that many countries will have put the worst of the pandemic behind them in the coming year.

"We think between now and the end of 2022, this is the point where we get control over this virus ... where we can significantly reduce severe disease and death," Maria Van Kerkhove, an epidemiologist leading the World Health Organization's (WHO) COVID-19 response, told Reuters.

The agency's view is based on work with disease experts who are mapping out the probable course of the pandemic over the next 18 months. By the end of 2022, the WHO aims for 70% of the world's population to be vaccinated.

"If we reach that target, we will be in a very, very different situation epidemiologically," Van Kerkhove said.

In the meantime, she worries about countries lifting COVID precautions prematurely. "It's amazing to me to be seeing, you know, people out on the streets, as if everything is over."

COVID-19 cases and deaths have been declining since August in nearly all regions of the world, according to the WHO's report on Oct. 26.

Europe has been an exception, with Delta wreaking new havoc in countries with low vaccination coverage such as Russia and Romania, as well as places that have lifted mask-wearing requirements. The variant has also contributed to rising infections in countries such as Singapore and China, which have high rates of vaccination but little natural immunity due to much stricter lockdown measures.

"The transition is going to be different in each place because it's going to be driven by the amount of immunity in the population from natural infection and of course, vaccine distribution, which is variable ... from county by county to country by country," said Marc Lipsitch, an epidemiologist at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Several experts said they expect the U.S. Delta wave will wrap up this month, and represent the last major COVID-19 surge.

"We're transitioning from the pandemic phase to the more endemic phase of this virus, where this virus just becomes a persistent menace here in the United States," former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said.

Chris Murray, a leading disease forecaster at the University of Washington, likewise sees the U.S. Delta surge ending in November.

"We'll go into a very modest winter increase" in COVID-19 cases, he said. "If there's no major new variants, then COVID starts to really wind down in April."

Even where cases are spiking as countries drop pandemic restrictions, as in the UK, vaccines appear to be keeping people out of the hospital.

Epidemiologist Neil Ferguson of Imperial College London said that for the UK, the "bulk of the pandemic as an emergency is behind us."

'A GRADUAL EVOLUTION'

COVID-19 is still expected to remain a major contributor to illness and death for years to come, much like other endemic illnesses such as malaria.

"Endemic does not mean benign," Van Kerkhove said.

Some experts say the virus will eventually behave more like measles, which still causes outbreaks in populations where vaccination coverage is low.

Others see COVID-19 becoming more a seasonal respiratory disease such as influenza. Or, the virus could become less of a killer, affecting mostly children, but that could take decades, some said.

Imperial College's Ferguson expects above-average deaths in the UK from respiratory disease due to COVID-19 for the next two-to-five years, but said it is unlikely to overwhelm health systems or require social distancing be reimposed.

"It's going to be a gradual evolution," Ferguson said. "We're going to be dealing with this as a more persistent virus."

Trevor Bedford, a computational virologist at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center who has been tracking the evolution of SARS-CoV-2, sees a milder winter wave in the United States followed by a transition to endemic disease in 2022-2023. He is projecting 50,000 to 100,000 U.S. COVID-19 deaths a year, on top of an estimated 30,000 annual deaths from flu.

The virus will likely continue to mutate, requiring annual booster shots tailored to the latest circulating variants, Bedford said.

If a seasonal COVID scenario plays out, in which the virus circulates in tandem with the flu, both Gottlieb and Murray expect it to have a significant impact on healthcare systems.

"It'll be an issue for hospital planners, like how do you deal with the COVID and flu surges in winter," Murray said. "But the era of ... massive public intervention in people's lives through mandates, that part I believe will be done after this winter surge."

Richard Hatchett, chief executive of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, said with some countries well protected by vaccines while others have virtually none, the world remains vulnerable.

"What keeps me up at night about COVID is the concern that we could have a variant emerge that evades our vaccines and evades immunity from prior infection," Hatchett said. "That would be like a new COVID pandemic emerging even while we're still in the old one."

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HEADLINE	11/02 Netherlands reinstates mask mandates
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/covid19-vaccinemandates-netherlands/2021/11/02/id/1043033/
GIST	<p>The Netherlands has reinstated COVID-19 restrictions, including a mask mandate, as cases increase.</p> <p>The Hill reports that the mask mandate has been reimplemented in stores and other public places. Additionally, the government is advising citizens to work from home at least half the time.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte stated that the "corona pass," which can either be COVID-19 vaccination proof or a recent negative test, will be expanded to include public places, including gyms,</p>

	<p>museums and outdoor venues. Rutte added that the government is deciding to expand the corona pass to include workplaces.</p> <p>After the Dutch government eased most of its social distancing measures in September, cases have risen in the past month and reached the highest total since July, causing hospitals to make room to treat COVID-19 patients. The country's National Institute for Health said that hospital admissions are up 31% in the past week, according to Reuters.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 EU lawmakers meet Taiwan premier
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/europe-china-taiwan-european-union-tsai-ing-wen-7d3646b91187590f4edc34b4b3ea5d10
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Bumping their elbows in greeting, European Union parliamentarians met with Taiwan's premier Su Tseng-chang on Wednesday, in the first official visit of an EU delegation to the island.</p> <p>Thirteen members of the EU's committee on foreign interference in democratic processes are visiting Taiwan, after the EU parliament passed a resolution last month calling for the body to "intensify EU-Taiwan political relations."</p> <p>"Although we are geographically very far away, between our two sides, we share the same values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law... In those regards, we are actually very close," said Su.</p> <p>The European delegation will also meet President Tsai Ing-wen and digital minister Audrey Tang, and visit Taiwanese think tanks, NGOs and others working on countering disinformation.</p> <p>The visit comes amid growing support for the island and rising negative perceptions toward China in Western countries.</p> <p>"The flourishing of your democracy is formidable and this is why we are so happy to be here," said Raphael Glucksmann, the chair of the foreign interference committee. "You have shown that in this region democracy can flourish and that authoritarian regimes are not the future."</p> <p>Lithuania, an EU member country, accepted Taiwan's request in July to open a "representative office" in its capital city that will act as a de facto embassy. It has also donated hundreds of thousands of vaccines to the island this year, while courting China's displeasure. In August, China withdrew its ambassador to Lithuania in protest and expelled Lithuania's ambassador from Beijing.</p> <p>In October, the EU parliament voted to pass a resolution on Taiwan issues, noting tensions in the South China Sea.</p> <p>The non-binding resolution, which passed with 580 votes in favor, 26 against and 66 abstentions, calls on the European Union to immediately begin taking steps to establish a bilateral investment agreement with Taiwan. It also proposes the politically symbolic gesture of changing the name of the representative office in Taiwan from the European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan to the European Union Office in Taiwan.</p> <p>The report also "call(s) on China to put an immediate end to its ongoing intrusions into Taiwan's air defence identification zone," saying that the "EU greatly values security in the Taiwan Strait."</p> <p>China has sent an increasing amount of fighter jets toward the island in a prolonged campaign of military harassment since at least last year, when Taiwan began publicly releasing the data. China has said it sends the planes as a warning to "Taiwan separatists" and to safeguard its sovereignty.</p>

	<p>The report also echoed the U.S. stance, as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently called for other members of the United Nations to back Taiwan’s independent participation in international groups.</p> <p>Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Joseph Wu visited the Czech Republic and Slovakia last week on a tour to step up cooperation with the two countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 UN: Ethiopia war ‘extreme brutality’
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/africa-united-nations-ethiopia-320c6cfa7434efe62a92faa03560a59f
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — The U.N. human rights chief said Wednesday that Ethiopia’s yearlong war has been marked by “extreme brutality” as a joint investigation into alleged atrocities faulted all sides for committing abuses, and “the big numbers of violations” are linked to Ethiopian forces and those from neighboring Eritrea.</p> <p>The investigation was hampered by authorities’ intimidation and restrictions and didn’t visit some of the war’s worst-affected locations.</p> <p>The report, a rare collaboration by the U.N. human rights office with the government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, was released a day before the war’s one-year mark and as Africa’s second most populous country enters a new state of emergency with rival Tigray forces threatening the capital.</p> <p>The U.N. told The Associated Press that the collaboration was necessary for its team to gain access to a troubled region that Ethiopian authorities have largely prevented journalists, rights groups and other outside observers from entering.</p> <p>The conflict that erupted in Ethiopia’s Tigray region has killed thousands of people since the government of Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed allowed soldiers from Eritrea to invade Tigray and join Ethiopian forces in fighting the Tigray forces who long dominated the national government before Abiy took office. Ethnic Tigrayans across the country have since reported being targeted with arbitrary detentions, while civilians in Tigray have described gang rapes, famine and mass expulsions.</p> <p>“In western Tigray, it was apparent that the Tigrayans had left most of the areas, as it was difficult to find Tigrayans to interview,” the new report says.</p> <p>The joint investigation covers events until late June when the Tigray forces regained much of their region, but it failed to visit some of the deadliest sites of the war, including the city of Axum, because of security and other obstacles. Notably, the report says, those obstacles included the Ethiopian government’s failure to release satellite phones procured for the investigation.</p> <p>The investigation says all sides, including forces from the neighboring Amhara region that have claimed western Tigray, have committed abuses, which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. It breaks little new ground and confirms in general the abuses described by witnesses throughout the war. But it gives little sense of scale, saying only that the more than 1,300 rapes reported to authorities are likely far fewer than the real number.</p> <p>Despite the report’s shortcomings, the prime minister’s office said in a statement that it “clearly established the claim of genocide as false and utterly lacking of any factual basis.” The statement noted “serious reservations” about the report but claimed it laid “sinister allegations to rest.” And it acknowledged the need to “redouble our efforts” to hold perpetrators accountable. A high-level task force will be formed, it said.</p> <p>Among the investigation’s findings: Several Ethiopian military camps were used to torture captured Tigray forces or civilians suspected of supporting them. Others were detained in “secret locations” and military camps across the country, with arbitrary detentions in many cases. Tigray forces detained some ethnic</p>

	<p>Amhara civilians in western Tigray in the early days of the war on suspicion of supporting the military, and in some cases tortured them.</p> <p>“The Tigray conflict has been marked by extreme brutality. The gravity and seriousness of the violations and abuses we have documented underscore the need to hold perpetrators accountable on all sides,” said Michelle Bachelet, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights. Reports of abuses such as summary executions in Tigray continue, she said.</p> <p>And yet the report gives little sign that Eritrean soldiers were responsible for many of the atrocities, as witnesses have alleged from the earliest days of the war. Until March, Ethiopia’s prime minister denied they were even in the country.</p> <p>Bachelet told reporters that while the report doesn’t explicitly mention that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces were responsible for the majority of the violations, “I would say that the big numbers of violations of human rights are linked to the Ethiopian and Eritrean defense forces.” She also noted “disturbing suggestions of ethnically motivated violence” that warrant further investigation. She denied the probe came under government pressure.</p> <p>Ethiopia’s government imposed a blockade on Tigray since the Tigray forces regained control in June, cutting off almost all access for commercial goods and humanitarian aid. That followed large-scale looting and destruction of food and crops across the region that “has had a severe socioeconomic impact on the civilian population,” the report says. In addition, some camps for displaced people who fled the war didn’t receive food rations for months.</p> <p>The joint investigation, however, “could not confirm deliberate or willful denial of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in Tigray or the use of starvation as a weapon of war.” It did call for further investigation.</p> <p>The new report, based on more than 260 interviews with victims and witnesses, said it had received no response from Eritrea’s government or from Amhara regional officials, and the Tigray forces expressed its opposition to the involvement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The report acknowledged that the presence of EHRC staffers at times inhibited interviews.</p> <p>The investigation says the Ethiopian government should “consider” setting up a court to ensure accountability and the international community should “support” the government in restoring stability. It also expresses concern that “investigations conducted by Ethiopian national institutions do not match the scope and breadth of the violations it has identified.”</p> <p>“We don’t have enough transparency,” Bachelet said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Amid scrutiny, few snags election voting
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/elections-voting-presidential-elections-misinformation-election-2020-4001ffebd1c5e2aa597d16581c749fd
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (AP) — After a year of dealing with false claims and death threats, election officials on Tuesday delivered a relatively smooth Election Day.</p> <p>There were just scattered reports of voting or equipment problems, typical for Election Day: a technical problem delaying a count of early ballots, a power outage, a polling place opening late. It was too soon to gauge the effects of new voting restrictions in place in a few states.</p> <p>In Virginia, as a sign of how relatively low-key voting was in the state, one of the biggest issues was reminding poll workers that voters were not required to wear a mask when casting their ballot.</p>

“Today was overwhelmingly a good day for Virginia,” said Virginia Department of Elections Commissioner Chris Piper. “Overall, the election today was about as smooth as we could have asked for.”

Piper said heavy turnout in the state prompted some polling locations to run out of ballots, but election officials were able to quickly pivot — either by printing more or directing voters to ballot-marking machines typically reserved for voters who need assistance. He said voting never stopped. In Fairfax County, the state’s most populous, corrupted thumb drives used in four voting machines delayed the counting of ballots cast early, some of which were still being tallied hours after polls closed.

Once polls close across the country, election officials focused on counting ballots cast by every eligible voter and reporting the results, which are all unofficial until the election is certified. That will not happen for days or even weeks as election officials finish their counting and then conduct their post-election reviews to ensure the number of ballots cast equals the number of voters who voted. Any discrepancies are researched, and election officials provide detailed explanations prior to any election being certified.

In Georgia, Fulton County elections director Rick Barron said turnout had been “light but steady.” Two county polling locations did not have all the equipment they needed when polls opened, but poll managers allowed voters to use emergency paper ballots until the equipment issues were resolved, Barron said.

“Lines were short and Election Day was an easy experience for the vast majority of voters,” said Fulton County Commission Chairman Robb Pitts.

Election officials said demonstrating secure, consistent and fair practices would help reassure those who still have doubts about last year’s presidential election as preparations begin for next year’s midterms.

“It is a great dress rehearsal for 2022,” Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon said.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Vaccines for kids aged 5-11
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-coronavirus-vaccine-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-5ddb5e3e92b12a6f5044dc229e19590d
GIST	<p>Vaccinations finally are available to U.S. children as young as 5, to the relief of some parents even as others have questions or fears.</p> <p>Late Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave the final OK for youngsters age 5 to 11 to get kid-size doses of the vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech. Pediatricians and other doctors’ groups praised the move and are gearing up to help families decide whether to vaccinate their children.</p> <p>The shots could be available as soon as Wednesday and will be offered at pediatricians offices, clinics and pharmacies. Like COVID-19 vaccines for adults, they are free.</p> <p>Here are some things to know:</p> <p>SHOULD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN GET VACCINATED?</p> <p>Yes, according to U.S. health authorities and leading doctors’ groups. Even though the virus tends to be more severe in adults than children, COVID-19 is causing plenty of preventable suffering among youngsters. About 1.9 million kids ages 5 to 11 have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Some 8,300 have been hospitalized, about a third needed intensive care, and at least 94 deaths have been verified.</p> <p>That’s not counting the risk of a serious complication called multisystem inflammatory syndrome that can hit kids several weeks after they recovered from even a mild infection.</p> <p>Vaccination also promises to help kids more safely resume school and social activities.</p>

ARE KID DOSES THE SAME SIZE AS ADULT ONES?

No. Children ages 5 to 11 will receive a third of the dose given to teens and adults. That's 10 micrograms per shot for youngsters, compared to 30 micrograms per shot for everyone 12 and older. Like everybody else, the younger kids will get two shots, three weeks apart.

HOW WELL DO THE SHOTS WORK?

In a study, Pfizer's pediatric vaccine proved nearly 91% effective at preventing symptomatic infection. Vaccinated youngsters developed levels of virus-fighting antibodies as strong as teens and young adults who'd received the full-strength dose.

ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS?

In the trial, the 5- to 11-year-olds had some annoying post-shot reactions, including sore arms and fatigue, similar to teens and young adults but were less likely to have fevers. Altogether, the study includes 4,600 youngsters, 3,100 of them given the vaccine and the rest dummy shots. The FDA found no safety concerns.

WHAT ABOUT RARE PROBLEMS?

Tens of millions of the larger doses have been given safely to Americans 12 and older. One very rare serious side effect has come to light: heart inflammation.

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These rare reactions have occurred mostly in young men or teens boys, usually after the second dose, and they tend to recover quickly. To put the risk in context, doctors say COVID-19 infection can cause more serious heart inflammation. One theory is that testosterone and puberty play a role, which is partly why experts expect any risk to younger kids would be even lower.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS ABOUT TO TURN 12?

CDC said children should get the dose that's right for their age on the day of vaccination. So if a child gets the 10-microgram dose for the first shot and then turns 12, the second shot should be the 30-microgram dose.

SHOULD I JUST WAIT UNTIL THEIR 12TH BIRTHDAY SO BOTH SHOTS ARE THE BIGGER DOSE?

Pediatricians say not to postpone vaccination because the kid-size dose is effective in that age group.

IS THE CDC'S MOVE A MANDATE?

No. The CDC has not mandated vaccinations for youngsters, but recommended them.

AREN'T ONLY SOME KIDS AT HIGH RISK OF SERIOUS COVID-19?

Nearly 70% of 5- to 11-year-olds hospitalized for COVID-19 have had other medical problems, including obesity and asthma. But sometimes the otherwise healthy get seriously ill, too. And given the profound social, mental health and educational impact the pandemic has had on youngsters, health authorities made clear that all children should be vaccinated. There also are equity concerns, as more than two-thirds of youngsters who've been hospitalized are Black or Hispanic.

WHAT IF MY CHILD ALREADY HAD COVID-19?

They still should be vaccinated once they've recovered, according the CDC. It's clear that prior infection does provide some protection against another bout but that immunity can vary depending on how seriously ill someone was, and how long ago. Studies of adults have found that vaccination after infection can dramatically boost protection.

IS PFIZER'S VACCINE THE ONLY CHOICE FOR CHILDREN?

In the U.S., for now, it is. Moderna's similar vaccine is used by teens in some other countries and is being tested in younger children but isn't yet available for Americans under age 18. A few other countries have used other kinds of COVID-19 vaccines in young children, including China, which just began vaccinations for 3-year-olds.

WHAT ABOUT VACCINATIONS FOR U.S. CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 5?

Stay tuned: Pfizer and Moderna are testing low doses in babies and preschoolers.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Faster-spreading Delta variant spotted
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-delta-plus-variant-ay-4-2-states/
GIST	<p>A potentially faster-spreading "sub-lineage" of the coronavirus Delta variant named AY.4.2 has been spotted by labs in at least 8 states, and health authorities in the United Kingdom say they are investigating a growing share of cases from this strain of the virus.</p> <p>Labs in California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Washington state, plus the District of Columbia, have so far spotted at least one case of AY.4.2.</p> <p>While it may spread somewhat faster, health authorities have not found evidence of more severe illness caused by the variant, and they say current vaccines remain effective against it.</p> <p>The sub-lineage has remained a small fraction of circulating cases in the U.S. for several weeks, but American health officials say they are already ramping up efforts to study the new Delta variant descendant.</p> <p>"We have teams that are constantly reviewing the genetic sequence data and looking for blips, an increase in a certain proportion or just something that's completely new," says Dr. Summer Galloway, executive secretary of the U.S. government's SARS-CoV-2 Interagency Group.</p> <p>Galloway, who also serves as policy lead on the CDC's laboratory and testing task force, said U.S. labs began preparing last month to prioritize tests to assess whether AY.4.2 can evade antibodies from vaccinated Americans, or from currently authorized monoclonal antibody treatments for the virus.</p> <p>That process can take up to four weeks, Galloway said, across several laboratories that will run tests with harmless "pseudoviruses" designed to impersonate the variant's characteristic mutations.</p> <p>Scientists have already turned up worrying combinations of mutations in other sub-lineages of Delta called AY.1 and AY.2, which like AY.4.2 have also sometimes been interchangeably called "Delta plus" variants.</p> <p>Last month, the Biden administration temporarily halted distribution of a monoclonal antibody treatment in Hawaii after estimated cases of AY.1 climbed up to 7.7% in the state. The Food and Drug Administration said lab experiments with AY.1 suggested it was "unlikely" the drug would be effective against the variant.</p> <p>The state has since resumed use of the antibody treatment, after AY.1 dropped below 5% in Hawaii. Nationwide, AY.1 has hovered around 0.1% of cases.</p>

"Right now, I think there's not a lot that we know. But in terms of the risk that it poses to public health, the prevalence is very low in the U.S. and we don't really anticipate that the substitutions [of AY.4.2] are going to have a significant impact on either the effectiveness of our vaccines or its susceptibility to monoclonal antibody treatments," said Galloway.

In the U.K., AY.4.2 has climbed to more than 11% of cases of the Delta variant. Health officials there say the variant does not appear to have led to a "significant reduction" in vaccine effectiveness or an uptick in hospitalizations, but it [could be](#) spreading faster because of "slightly increased biological transmissibility."

"Estimated growth rates remain slightly higher for AY.4.2 than for Delta, and the household secondary attack rate is higher for AY.4.2 cases than for other Delta cases," said a report [published Friday](#) by the U.K. Health Security Agency.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that AY.4.2 has made up less than 0.05% of circulating cases in the U.S. for several weeks, according to an agency spokesperson. Grouped together, [CDC estimates](#) that the [Delta variant](#) and its sub-lineages has been virtually 100% of cases in the U.S. for months.

"Even based on the data in the U.K., if you look at the transmission advantage, it looks smaller. It's not like Delta, which as soon as they came in, it was almost a 50[%] to 60% advantage over all previous lineages," says Dr. Karthik Gangavarapu, a postdoctoral researcher at UCLA's Suchard group.

Gangavarapu was part of the team to lead Scripps Research's variant tracking effort at Outbreak.info, which has tracked variants like AY.4.2 as they have emerged in an international database of "sequenced" viruses maintained by a group called the [GISAID Initiative](#).

"It could have a slight transmission advantage, but it could also have other factors that are important. For example, how is the population immunity in a given location? What is the vaccination rate? Those may have some sort of impact on how the variant is spreading," said Gangavarapu.

The largest share of circulating virus in the U.S. remains closely related to the original Delta variant, [among samples](#) reported to GISAID. Scientists have speculated that the next major variant of concern could emerge as a mutation from the Delta variant, though Gangavarapu cautioned that highly-contagious strains have arisen largely independently from one another.

Delta variant sub-lineages like AY.25, AY.3, and AY.44 also currently make up large U.S. proportions of cases, though not necessarily because they have an advantage over their siblings.

Outbreak.info had previously counted AY.4.2 sightings in at least 35 states. However, Gangavarapu said [a bug](#) in the "Pangolin" system used to generate reports of variants had resulted in some false positives for the sub-lineage showing up in some tallies.

New sub-lineages are frequently [re-categorized by scientists](#) to "help researchers track the virus" clustered in certain regions, even when they sport mutations that end up having no meaningful impact on the public health risk of the variant.

"Probably over the next month or so we will get more data to actually see if there is the same sort of increase in prevalence that we see in the U.K. in the U.S. as of now," says Gangavarapu.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Soaring wheat prices raise bread costs
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/soaring-wheat-prices-raising-bread-124125570.html

GIST

(Bloomberg) -- Wheat prices have surged from the U.S. to Russia, hitting a record in Europe and raising bread costs all over the world. And there may not be much relief soon.

The crop -- grown on more land than any other -- was hit by droughts, frost and heavy rain this year in key exporters. That's curbed supplies used in everything from pizza crusts and French baguettes to Asian noodles and African couscous, pushing benchmark prices in Chicago to an almost nine-year high.

That's not just threatening higher grocery bills -- it's giving central banks a bigger inflation headache and risks worsening global hunger that's already at a multiyear high. The worry is that big crops looming in Argentina and Australia won't fully ease tight supply, and fields elsewhere are only just being planted.

"We could see further upside," said Carlos Mera, head of agricultural commodities market research at Rabobank in London. "The higher the price goes, the more fear there is in the market and the more panic buying."

Wheat in Chicago traded lower on Tuesday, after touching the highest since December 2012, while Paris futures reached a record 297 euros a ton before closing at 292.75 euros.

Here's what's driven the rally:

Dwindling Stockpiles

While the world has a lot of wheat, much of that's held in countries like China, which ships little abroad. Inventories in the top seven exporters -- a better gauge of availability -- are expected to sink to an eight-year low. Argentina and Australia just started harvesting, but it'll take the better part of a year before Northern Hemisphere silos are replenished with the next crop.

Protectionist Measures

Russia -- last season's top shipper -- started taxing exports this year to safeguard supplies and keep domestic costs in check, and signaled an overseas sales quota is likely. That's helped to slow shipments and support prices elsewhere, while giving rival suppliers the chance to grab more market share.

Import Needs

Although top wheat buyer Egypt temporarily balked at high prices last month, appetite from importers remains strong, with Saudi Arabia booking more than double the expected amount in its latest tender. Countries typically stockpile several months of supply, but governments can't risk running out before the next major harvests.

The rising prices are becoming a bigger challenge. Turkey's president has blamed supermarket chains for a surge in food bills, Egypt is preparing to hike prices for the bread it subsidizes for its citizens and Tunisia doesn't expect any relief in durum wheat costs until next year's harvest.

Costlier Fertilizer

While wheat's rally is good news for farmers, their costs are going up too. Fertilizer prices are soaring from Europe to North America on production shortages, threatening to weigh on harvests next season.

Winter wheat makes up the bulk of supplies across the Northern Hemisphere, and while plantings are almost finished, farmers need to stock up on the nutrients now to boost yields and quality in the spring. French growers are already worried about fertilizer shortages.

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HEADLINE

11/02 Vaccine mandates loom for workers

SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-11-02/workers-test-bidens-vaccine-mandate-as-deadline-looms
GIST	<p>From New York City police officers and firefighters to Los Angeles teachers and staff to Massachusetts state employees, a small yet vocal group of workers throughout the country are putting vaccine mandates and employers to the test, walking out of work and opting to go on unpaid leave over signing up for a shot.</p> <p>President Joe Biden in September announced new requirements to compel public and private employees to get the coronavirus vaccine, requiring the majority of federal workers and contractors to be fully vaccinated against the coronavirus by Dec. 8, having complete either a one or two-dose vaccine regiment at least two weeks before the deadline. The requirements also direct the Labor Department to compel private sector companies with more than 100 employees to ensure workers get vaccinated or face weekly testing before going to work, which would affect around 80 million employees.</p> <p>The requirement for private companies – presumably including potential exemptions – is still in the works, although a government official announced that details would be made available in the coming days. But the requirement for federal workers and contractors will be in full swing in the coming weeks, looming large over million of employees nationwide. Still, the Biden administration has signaled some flexibility after a district court judge last week issued a temporary restraining order barring it from firing federal employees awaiting processing of religious exemption pleas.</p> <p>It's unclear how disruptive the mandates could be. In New York, police unions warned that as many as 10,000 police officers could be placed on involuntary leave for failing to meet the city's Monday vaccine deadline. But officials announced Tuesday after the mandate took effect that so far just 34 uniformed officers had been put on leave.</p> <p>Employees aren't the only ones pushing back against Biden's mandates. GOP leaders in the days following the announcement and in recent weeks have launched efforts to halt the mandates, particularly taking issue with the move to develop a vaccine mandate for the private sector.</p> <p>Two dozen Republican state attorneys general in a letter urged the president to reconsider his decision to require companies with more than 100 employees to mandate vaccinations and frequent coronavirus testing for workers, calling the plan "disastrous and counterproductive."</p> <p>"Mr. President, your vaccination mandate represents not only a threat to individual liberty, but a public health disaster that will displace vulnerable workers and exacerbate a nationwide hospital staffing crisis, with severe consequences for all Americans," the letter reads.</p> <p>Texas Gov. Greg Abbott called the requirement an "assault on private businesses," while Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts called it a "stunning violation of personal freedom and abuse of the federal government's power." South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem tweeted that her state will "stand up to defend freedom," telling Biden, "see you in court." And Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said the group will sue the Biden administration "to protect Americans and their liberties."</p> <p>The Wyoming legislature called a special session with the primary goal of halting the president's vaccine requirements, while last week, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis sued the Biden administration over the mandates, arguing that "the federal government is exceeding their power."</p> <p>But more employees are in favor of vaccine mandates than opposed. According to a recent Gallup poll, 56% of employees would support their employer imposing a vaccine mandate in the workplace, up from 46% in May.</p> <p>Indeed, 36% of U.S. workers say their employer has already imposed a vaccine requirement, while an additional 39% of workers say their employer has encouraged employees to get vaccinated.</p> <p>Despite the majority of workers favoring vaccine mandates, a consistent 30% are strongly opposed, according to Gallup. But of those opposed, just 7% say they are actively looking for a different job, while</p>

	<p>3% say they have no plans to get vaccinated and currently work for an employer with a vaccine requirement in place.</p> <p>And although 1 in 5 workers remain unvaccinated, the high number of vaccinations means that the vast majority of U.S. workers will not have to choose between getting the shot or losing their job if their employer mandates them.</p> <p>The vaccine mandate deadline approaches as a record number of people have quit their jobs in recent months for various reasons, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, amid a seismic shift in the labor market. The wave of resignations may continue to pose personnel challenges for companies, especially if more workers choose to leave in light of vaccination requirements.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Seattle OPA chief seeks new Phoenix job
SOURCE	https://www.kuow.org/stories/seattle-s-top-police-watchdog-wants-a-job-in-phoenix-two-former-city-employees-aim-to-thwart-him
GIST	<p>Andrew Meyerberg, the head of the office that oversees police accountability, appears to want out of Seattle.</p> <p>“The job has a shelf life,” Myerberg said. “It’s a really difficult job, and it’s a stressful job.”</p> <p>Myerberg is a finalist for a job with the City of Phoenix for a position similar to the one he currently has, overseeing a recently created department like Seattle’s accountability office.</p> <p>“I’ve been pretty clear with folks, and this has been for years, that I wasn’t going to renew my term,” Myerberg said. His term expires next year, on Dec. 31, 2022.</p> <p>Adding to the strain was the summer of 2020, which saw thousands of complaints against Seattle officers as people protested against police brutality and police unleashed pepper spray and blast balls.</p> <p>Internally, too, there’s been tension. Two former employees with a partner agency, the Seattle Office of Inspector General, are trying to curb Myerberg’s chances.</p> <p>These former employees published an open letter to the people of Phoenix, denouncing Myerberg. They redacted their names from the letter, and KUOW is not naming them at their request. They said they worry about retaliation from pro-cop supporters.</p> <p>“Mr. Myerberg does not appear to be qualified, able, or willing to take action toward genuine accountability for the police, even those under his own direct supervision,” the letter reads.</p> <p>While the Office of Police Accountability investigates citizen complaints into police behavior, it’s the job of Seattle’s Office of Inspector General to ensure these investigations are done adequately. These two former employees worked with Myerberg in their capacity as investigators who reviewed police accountability examinations.</p> <p>These former colleagues said that when they complained about the police accountability office, they were dismissed.</p> <p>Before being fired, one of the former employees said they faced aggressive behavior from a sergeant working with the police accountability office, according to records obtained by KUOW. They said the sergeant questioned their credentials and got in their face.</p> <p>The former employee sent the city a demand letter, the precursor to a lawsuit, for damages in 2019. They wrote that the police accountability office – Myerberg’s office – “appeared to be increasingly resistant to</p>

oversight” by the Office of Inspector General. The former employee said their boss warned them to maintain “collegial relations.”

Then there was an ethics complaint filed by a former Office of Inspector General employee this year. [As was first reported by the South Seattle Emerald](#), the other employee resigned in August, and filed a formal ethics complaint against Inspector General Lisa Judge and Deputy Inspector General Amy Tsai.

The complaint said that when they raised concerns about Myerberg inaccurately depicting events in investigation findings, their complaints went unaddressed. They said they were told by the Office of Inspector General leadership not to criticize the police accountability office in writing, to avoid leaking information to the press through public disclosure requests.

Leadership within the Office of Inspector General countered these claims.

“OIG takes its role in the accountability system seriously and understands that transparency and maintaining public trust are critical,” Inspector General Lisa Judge said by email. “We are proud of the work that we do and value the objectivity and independence that characterize our work product.”

The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission and human resources took no action, Myerberg said. A commission employee would not elaborate on the complaint's status, citing a general policy against disclosure.

The former employee who filed the complaint said they were told by the Ethics and Elections Commission that they didn't consider the complaint an ethics issue, and told by human resources that it wasn't within their purview.

Among the former employees’ concerns, as outlined in their open letter, is Myerberg’s past work.

Before coming to the watchdog office, Myerberg was lead attorney representing Seattle in the federal consent decree imposed on the police department. Before that, Myerberg helped defend police in New York City against civil lawsuits, including legal action brought forward by the Central Park Five, a group of Black men who were wrongfully convicted of assault as teenagers in the early ‘90s.

The letter cites when Myerberg was assistant city attorney, and Seattle was prosecuting a paraplegic Black and Indigenous man accused of assaulting officers.

One of the two former Inspector General employees worked to defend the man who, according to the letter, was in his wheelchair outside a hospital when police allegedly threw him to the ground.

The defense requested files that outlined the histories of the arresting officers.

“The City resisted providing this evidence,” said the former employee’s demand letter to the city. Myerberg had agreed to give files to the judge for review. The judge would then decide what should be released to the defense.

Before that could happen, the employee letter continues, a paralegal took the files from the judge’s chambers and told the bailiff they would be delivered to the defense instead. They never were.

The criminal case against this paraplegic man was dismissed for prosecutorial misconduct, because the prosecution failed to deliver records to the defense.

Myerberg said he wasn’t involved in the delivery of the records.

“There may have been some confusion when they said, ‘Okay, then we’ll deliver them to defense counsel, and that didn't happen,’” he said. “But the fact is, they were delivered to the judge. So the records are not being withheld, the records were produced.”

	A City of Phoenix employee said that they search the online presence of all candidates and they're taking everything into account when making their decision. They anticipate filling the position by the end of October.
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HEADLINE	11/02 Police accountability laws; but not sheriffs?
SOURCE	https://patch.com/washington/seattle/new-wa-police-accountability-laws-hardly-affect-sheriffs-ed-troyer
GIST	<p>Washington state legislators passed a dozen new laws this year aimed at holding police officers accountable.</p> <p>But when it comes to elected sheriffs — like Pierce County's Ed Troyer, who faces criminal charges after calling 911 on a Black newspaper carrier — the new laws don't have quite the same teeth.</p> <p>Troyer, the sheriff of Washington state's second-most populous county, was charged last month with one count of false reporting and one count of making a false or misleading statement to a public servant. Both are misdemeanors.</p> <p>Lying can be enough to get an officer's certification revoked, a step that normally prevents someone from being able to work as a cop anywhere in the state. The Legislature recently beefed up the state's decertification process, giving a state commission greater authority to decertify cops and increasing the number of offenses that can cause officers to lose their jobs.</p> <p>For Troyer, however, even if he loses his policing license over his alleged falsehoods, that wouldn't cause him to lose his job as Pierce County's elected sheriff.</p> <p>That's because nothing in state law or county statute requires elected sheriffs to maintain their status as sworn law enforcement officers, according to a Pierce County spokesperson and the state Criminal Justice Training Commission, which certifies police.</p> <p>While state law requires elected sheriffs to have gone through police academy training at some point in their lives — either before they run or within 12 months of taking office — sheriffs don't need to remain certified police officers to continue working as sheriffs.</p> <p>Sakara Remmu, lead strategist of the Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance, said that appears to create an unacceptable loophole for elected sheriffs like Troyer.</p> <p>"Potentially, he is in a legal loophole right now that is preventing accountability or removing him from his position," said Remmu, whose organization has asked Troyer to resign.</p> <p>The Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance has also filed civil rights complaints with the FBI and the Department of Justice over Troyer's actions.</p> <p>The charges against Troyer stem from a Jan. 27 early morning encounter during which Troyer repeatedly told a police dispatcher that a Black newspaper carrier had threatened to kill him. Troyer later recanted that statement, telling a Tacoma police officer that no such threat was made, according to charging documents and a police report.</p> <p>Last month, Troyer released a statement calling the charges against him a "politically motivated anti-cop hit job." His attorney entered a plea of not guilty on his behalf Thursday.</p> <p>Troyer's attorney, John Sheeran, told Crosscut he thinks it is highly unlikely that Troyer would be decertified over the Jan. 27 incident, which occurred when Troyer was off duty. Sheeran said Troyer has no plans to resign and will fight the charges to the end.</p>

Sheeran, too, called the charges against the sheriff "politically motivated."

"There is no doubt the attorney general is looking to curry favor with the anti-police, defund-the-police political wing," Sheeran said Friday.

Derek Young, who chairs the Pierce County Council, said he is disappointed that Troyer "seems unrepentant" for his behavior, which he said endangered the life of the 24-year-old newspaper carrier, Sedrick Altheimer.

But as things stand, Young said, "In essence, the sheriff is accountable only to the people who elect him."

In response to Troyer's 911 call, 14 police officers and sheriff's deputies showed up to confront Altheimer, according to charging documents filed by Attorney General Bob Ferguson. More were on the way before officers on the scene called them off.

In addition to initially saying that Altheimer had threatened to kill him, Troyer told the 911 dispatcher that Altheimer had "blocked" him in and was "pushing against" his car, according to [a recording of the 911 call](#).

That set the stage for a tense police confrontation that easily could have resulted in Altheimer being shot and killed, said Remmu of the Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance.

Altheimer wasn't arrested that night, but was questioned and frisked by police. Police let him go after he told them he was out doing his job delivering newspapers, not trying to break into people's houses, as Troyer had suggested during the 911 call. Altheimer has since [filed a lawsuit](#) over the incident.

When the Legislature passed [several high-profile police accountability bills](#) this year, key lawmakers said the revamped decertification process would be the main means of enforcing those new laws. That means cops who fail to report others' misconduct, use newly banned police tactics such as chokeholds or violate new standards for uses of force are supposed to be held accountable through the decertification process, said state Sen. Manka Dhingra, D-Redmond, who worked on the legislation.

Dhingra noted there was [a recent proposal in the Legislature](#) to require all elected sheriffs to be certified law enforcement officers, or else undergo a specialized sheriff training course. The bill didn't pass, but Dhingra thinks requiring sheriffs to be certified would be a good idea.

"I would love to see them be certified law enforcement officers, and absolutely hold them to the high standard we expect of all law enforcement officers — because they have a lot of power," Dhingra said last week.

Decertification would bar Troyer from some forms of police work, such as chasing down suspects or making traffic stops. But most sheriffs rarely go out on patrol, meaning decertification likely wouldn't have much practical effect on them. "It's an admin job — they are running the office and running the department," Dhingra said.

If Troyer were convicted of a felony, that would automatically remove him from office [under a state law](#) that sets qualifications for public offices. But convictions for misdemeanors, like the crimes Troyer is charged with, don't have the same effect — not unless they involve "malfeasance in office."

At this point, it's not clear whether the charges filed against Troyer could fall into that category, wrote Brian Moran, a former U.S. attorney who conducted an independent investigation into Troyer's conduct. That investigation, which was commissioned by the Pierce County Council, [was released publicly last week](#).

	<p>That means a voter-initiated recall petition is the most direct way of holding Troyer accountable, said James Bible, a civil rights attorney who is representing the family of Manuel Ellis, a Black man killed by Tacoma police last year.</p> <p>"It is embarrassing that he represents law enforcement in any form at this stage in his career," said Bible, who said Troyer also made many false statements about the Ellis case early on. Three Tacoma police officers now face criminal charges over Ellis' death.</p> <p>Because Troyer is serving the first year of a four-year term, voters won't have the opportunity to replace him for three years, unless there is a successful recall campaign.</p> <p>Young, the Pierce County Council chair, said he isn't aware of an active petition right now to recall Troyer — but he knows some groups have been discussing the idea.</p> <p>Because of the Jan. 27 incident, Troyer has been added to a list of police officers who have credibility issues, commonly known as a Brady list. The committee that decides who goes on that list met Friday and decided that Troyer should be added, said Adam Faber, a spokesperson for the Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.</p> <p>That means that if Troyer is called as a witness in a criminal case, the county will now notify defense attorneys of how he has been accused of lying — information that could cast doubt on his testimony.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Seattle mayor, council face-off: SPD hiring
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3213289/mayor-durkan-city-council-spd-hiring-bonuses-showdown/
GIST	<p>With Mayor Jenny Durkan issuing an emergency declaration last Friday to authorize hiring bonuses for new Seattle Police Department employees, it will now be up to the city council to decide how to proceed.</p> <p>The order would seek to immediately implement hiring bonuses of \$25,000 for lateral SPD hires and \$10,000 for new hires, with Durkan pointing to concerns over the 250 officers her office says have left the department over the last two years.</p> <p>While Durkan has broad executive authority to issue the order itself, councilmembers ultimately have final say, with the option to approve it, reject it, or amend it. During a Monday morning council briefing, Councilmember Kshama Sawant expressed her hope to have central staff “prepare the legislation to reject this emergency order.”</p> <p>Council President Lorena Gonzalez was more hesitant to dismiss the order out of hand, urging her colleagues to “spend some time” with it, and to direct all questions to central staff “by the end of the day.”</p> <p>Councilmember Lisa Herbold — who also chairs the council’s public safety committee — expressed her belief that the process should be addressed through the ongoing budget process, rather than through an emergency order.</p> <p>“I really feel like we should be going with this issue as part of the budget process, and hope that’s how we move forward,” she said.</p> <p>Durkan had originally proposed that the city set aside \$1.09 million in the 2022 budget to cover SPD hiring bonuses. Herbold has since responded with an amendment that would move that money into general reserves while the city awaits “recommendations from a report on a Citywide hiring incentive program.”</p> <p>That amendment was co-sponsored by Gonzalez, as well as Councilmembers Andrew Lewis and Tammy Morales, signaling that a large portion of the council could be opposed to Durkan’s emergency order, which would cover SPD hiring bonuses through the end of this year. Councilmembers also rejected a plan</p>

	from Durkan's office in September , which had sought to use savings from recently-departed officers to fund hiring and retention efforts.
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HEADLINE	11/02 Minneapolis rejects police reform measure
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/02/minneapolis-mayor-police-vote/
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS — Seventeen months after George Floyd's murder led to nationwide calls to abolish or defund the police, voters in the city where the movement began soundly rejected a proposal Tuesday to replace its troubled police department in an election likely to have national implications in the debate over policing and racial justice.</p> <p>City Question Two would have amended the Minneapolis charter to allow the police department to be replaced by a Department of Public Safety. The new agency would have taken a “comprehensive public health approach” to public safety, including dispatching mental health workers to certain calls and more investment in violence prevention efforts.</p> <p>The measure also would have removed decades-old language from the city charter requiring a minimum number of police officers based on its population. The new department “could include” police officers “if necessary” — wording that potentially doomed the measure among residents concerned about rising violent crime in the city, even as supporters argued the city would still have armed police because state law requires them to respond in certain circumstances.</p> <p>People on both sides of the fight had predicted results would be close, but with 99 percent of precincts reporting late Tuesday, 56 percent of voters had rejected the measure — a disappointing result for supporters of the initiative, who blamed “disinformation” and “fearmongering” for the loss.</p> <p>“The empire strikes back,” tweeted D.A. Bullock, a Black filmmaker and activist associated with the racial justice group Reclaim the Block, who had strongly advocated for the measure.</p> <p>Voters also were considering the fate of Mayor Jacob Frey, a liberal Democrat who has faced criticism over his leadership of the city after Floyd's murder — including his refusal to defund the police and his response to the city's rising crime. All 13 members of the city council were also on the ballot in an election that has been driven by the intense debate over public safety in the city's first election since Floyd died on May 25, 2020, beneath the knee of a White Minneapolis police officer.</p> <p>Final results on those races, which will be determined by ranked-choice voting, were expected Wednesday. But Frey, who held a commanding lead in first-choice votes, welcomed the ballot measure's defeat and called on residents to unite in favor of “true and transformational change” in public safety.</p> <p>“Minneapolis right now is sending a message to the entire nation that real progress requires real work,” Frey told supporters at an election night watch party. “We need deep, structural change to policing in America. At the same time, we need police officers to make sure that they are working directly with the community to keep us safe.”</p> <p>While Floyd's murder sparked urgent calls for reform in a city where residents have long complained about the brutal tactics of police, especially toward people of color, the question of how to get there exposed deep divides across this overwhelmingly Democratic city.</p> <p>“We can't continue like this. We need change with the police,” said Chris Conner, a 26-year-old retail worker who was preparing to cast his ballot at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, just blocks from the burned-out husk of a South Minneapolis police station that was destroyed in the fiery protests in the aftermath of Floyd's death.</p> <p>Conner, who is White, recalled how changes made after other high-profile police killings in the city — body cameras and enhanced training — were supposed to fix the department's problems and offer more</p>

accountability. But Floyd was killed, and Conner said he has observed no change in “hostile behavior” from police — “only that you see them less.”

“I feel like it’s better to start over,” said Conner, who voted in support of the ballot measure.

Across town in North Minneapolis, the heart of the city’s Black community, which has been hard hit by rising violence, voters said they strongly supported reform but were uneasy about what replacing the police department would mean, pointing to the lack of specifics about what would happen next.

“It’s a no-win situation,” said Nicole Dillard, who voted against the policing question. Dillard, who is Black, said she was no fan of Minneapolis police, but she worried the ballot measure was a backdoor effort to simply abolish the police, which was untenable in a neighborhood where gun violence has killed and wounded dozens of people this year. “We need someone to call, and if it’s not police, who will it be?” Dillard said. “We already don’t have enough police on the street.”

Not far from where Dillard voted was a large memorial for Aniya Allen, a 6-year-old who was fatally shot while riding in her mother’s car in May — one of several children killed by stray gunfire this year whose killings have gone unsolved.

The policing measure would have expanded oversight of the city’s public safety to include the city council and the mayor, who has had sole administrative oversight of the police department.

But voters appear to have been turned off by the lack of specifics about how the new agency would have been established — a detail raised by high-profile critics of the measure, including Frey and Police Chief Medaria Arradondo.

In a news conference last week, Arradondo, the city’s first Black chief, called the idea of having to report to 14 different people “wholly unbearable” and suggested the ballot measure would further endanger the city’s most vulnerable, including people of color who bear the brunt of violent crime.

The state’s best-known Democratic liberals — U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, both of whom live in Minneapolis — actively campaigned in support of the measure, while other top Democrats, including Gov. Tim Walz and U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, opposed it.

Although the White House never formally weighed in on the ballot measure, advisers to President Biden worked on opposite sides of the fight, which spurred millions of dollars in contributions to both sides — much of that money from interests outside Minneapolis and a nod to the national implications of the election.

JaNae’ Bates, a minister and leader of Yes 4 Minneapolis, said earlier Tuesday that if the measure failed, “disinformation” put out by the measure’s opponents would be to blame. But she argued the group’s efforts had transformed the conversation around public safety in the city and it would continue to fight for reform.

“No matter what happens today, the eyes of the world will continue to be on Minneapolis as we move forward, because there’s work to be done regardless of the outcome of the election,” Bates said.

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HEADLINE	11/03 China confiscates coal from households
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-climate-coal-emissions-cop26/2021/11/03/f32c1c9e-3642-11ec-9662-399cfa75efee_story.html
GIST	On a crisp Saturday morning last month, men in the black jackets favored by local Chinese officials were going door to door.

They were checking to make sure villagers in Tangshan's Fengrun district — one of China's smoggiest spots — had quit burning coal for heat.

“We must ensure that ‘not one fire burns, not one wisp of smoke wafts, not one black speck remains,’ ” the Fengrun Economy and Environmental Bureau declared, according to an account of the operation it published.

After knocking on 596 doors, the officials had turned up nearly a ton of unprocessed coal and nine tons of briquettes, and warned residents of the steelmaking hub that burning coal was no longer allowed.

The household checks reflect tensions in China's northeastern rust belt as the country comes under [new global pressure](#) to reduce its carbon emissions.

China is by far the largest greenhouse gas emitter, contributing 27 percent of the world's output. The country is [in the spotlight](#) at [the COP26 talks](#) in Glasgow, Scotland, where leaders are discussing how to forestall severe effects of climate change.

China's President Xi Jinping is not attending the summit in person, but he sent [written remarks](#) on Monday that reiterated the country's carbon emissions will peak before 2030.

For years, China has enacted a range of draconian-sounding measures to tamp down its [air pollution](#), including suspending factory production for weeks on end, allowing cars in Beijing to drive only every other day, and now, raids on household coal stashes.

Yet China's carbon emissions have continued to grow.

In recent weeks in Tangshan, officials have urged residents to go green by ditching their coal stoves for electric heaters, according to local government announcements. Climate researchers say such measures will have limited impact on emissions, because households use a lot less coal than factories do.

“It's relatively small fry compared to those major sources of coal consumption like electric power and industry,” said Cecilia Han Springer, a senior researcher at Boston University's Global China Initiative.

Nearly 60 percent of China's electricity supply still comes from coal. In guidelines released Oct. 24, China pledged to cut reliance on fossil fuels to less than 20 percent by 2060, but that still leaves a long runway for coal-powered electricity.

Factories also [keep finding ways](#) around air-pollution curbs, sometimes by bribing local regulators or falsifying records.

In March, China's environment minister made a surprise visit to Tangshan, a two-hour drive east of Beijing, after the capital experienced smoggy skies during the Two Sessions, the biggest political event of the year. He found four steelmakers to be faking data to get around air-pollution curbs. The steelmakers were fined, and some of the employees prosecuted.

The stakes will be even higher in February, when Beijing [hosts the Winter Olympics](#). Officials in Tangshan and other cities near the capital have been preparing for months to ensure blue skies.

The Games may hasten China's green-energy transition, at least in the country's northeast. But some of the measures are stopgaps or only cosmetic.

Tangshan has been a focus of this effort, as the nation's heart for steelmaking, a coal-thirsty industry.

In August, Tangshan issued draft regulations that said Olympics pollution controls will be in force from late January through mid-March. They include factory production halts, taking trucks off the roads and a “Big Sweep” to remove dust from city streets.

Chinese cities have long hired workers to sweep streets or spray them down with water to keep airborne dust from adding to visible smog. (Sweeping, of course, does not reduce carbon emissions.)

In Tangshan this winter, factories will need to suspend production. They won't be able to use the excuse that they had already powered down but residual fumes were still wafting: "For industries where air pollution may continue after production is halted, enterprises must leave sufficient time to adjust production," the regulations state.

Use of diesel trucks for transporting cargo will be suspended in Tangshan during the Olympics. Officials must decrease their car trips by 80 percent. All new municipal buses must be new-energy models.

One complication has been a global energy crunch. After many years of stable electricity supply, China is implementing [rolling power outages](#) to conserve fuel, while officials scrambled to secure more coal from neighboring countries.

Premier Li Keqiang made clear last month that while China wanted to reduce emissions, social stability came first. He criticized "campaign-style" carbon-reduction efforts and "one size fits all" production cuts in parts of the country.

"First, we must give priority to people's livelihood, ensure the people's livelihood and heating energy in winter, and ensure the use of coal for power generation and heating," he said.

The situation leaves local officials in a quandary this winter, as they face the conflicting demands of keeping the coal flowing while reducing air pollution.

Angel Hsu, a climate scientist and professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said China's shift to green energy should become easier in coming years, as the country has scaled up solar-panel production enough to be cost-effective.

"It's cheaper actually for China to build an entirely new power plant that is fueled by solar power than to continue to maintain a coal-fired power plant," she said.

For now, officials in Tangshan's Fengrun district have been rushing to procure heat pumps — which are like reverse air conditioners — to help keep electricity costs manageable for residents in the switch from coal.

In September, the district announced a rush order of 17,104 heat pumps at a cost of \$16 million. The call for bids said they would be installed across several dozen villages in Fengrun.

"When you're talking about low-income rural households, you have to make sure there are affordable alternatives," said Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air. "With direct electric heating, you're going to be paying more. But if you install a heat pump, it's much more energy efficient."

In Fengrun's Qishuzhuang village, officials gathered on Oct. 26 to review their marching orders, according to a summary posted on a government social media account.

"Check and confiscate coal," the officials were told. "Ensure that there is no trace of coal burning before the end of the month."

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HEADLINE	11/02 Electric cars: what happens used batteries?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/cars-going-electric-what-happens-used-batteries/
GIST	THIS SUMMER, DIRK Spiers, a tall, rumpled Dutchman-turned-Oklahoman, got a heads-up from General Motors about more problems with the Chevrolet Bolt. Over the previous year, the car model

that had once been celebrated as GM's [grand victory over Tesla](#)—the United States' first truly mass-market [electric vehicle](#)—had begun to look more like a slow-motion disaster. Bolts were being recalled because of a series of [rare but destructive fires](#) sparked when drivers left their cars charging overnight. GM had traced the problem to flaws in the lithium-ion battery cells manufactured by South Korea's LG Chem.

Now the automaker was expanding the recall to all 141,000 Bolts sold worldwide since 2017. Fixing them would be a massive operation. Unlike the toaster-oven-sized lead-acid batteries inside most gas-powered vehicles, the lithium-ion battery pack inside the Bolt runs the full wheelbase of the car and weighs 960 pounds. It contains hundreds of battery cells that are delicate and finicky. When taken apart for repairs, they can be dangerous, and incorrect handling can lead to noxious fumes and fires.

Spiers was a natural person to call for help. His relationship with GM had begun 11 years earlier, when he buttonholed the company's head of development for an earlier electric vehicle, [the Volt](#), about GM's plan for the batteries when they broke or died. It turned out GM didn't really have one. Spiers turned that opening into a business that now handles the logistics of dead and dying EV batteries from every major carmaker that sells in the US, except [Tesla](#). Spiers New Technologies takes flawed batteries and transports, tests, and—when possible—disassembles, fixes, and refurbishes them. “We get our hands dirty,” Spiers says.

When batteries can't be fixed or reused, the company recycles some at its onsite facility. It also stores batteries. Lots of them. SNT's main warehouse in Oklahoma City holds hundreds of electric car batteries, stacked on shelves that jut 30 feet into the air. With the Bolt recall, GM will send SNT many more.

Those batteries, and millions more like them that will eventually come off the road, are a challenge for the world's electrified future. Automakers are pouring billions into electrification with the promise that this generation of cars will be cleaner than their gas-powered predecessors. By the end of the decade, the International Energy Agency estimates there will be between 148 million and 230 million battery-powered vehicles on the road worldwide, accounting for up to 12 percent of the global automotive fleet.

The last thing anyone wants is for those batteries to become waste. Lithium-ion batteries, like other electronics, are toxic, and can cause destructive fires that spread quickly—a danger that runs especially high when they are stored together. A [recent EPA report](#) found that lithium-ion batteries caused at least 65 fires at municipal waste facilities last year, though most were ignited by smaller batteries, like those made for cell phones and laptops. In SNT's warehouse, bright red emergency water lines snake across the ceilings, a safeguard against calamity.

But seen another way, those old batteries are an opportunity for an even greener automotive future. EVs are more eco-friendly than their gas-burning counterparts, but they still come with environmental costs. Batteries contain valuable minerals like [cobalt](#) and lithium, which are primarily [extracted](#) and processed overseas, where they cost local communities dearly in [labor abuses](#) and vital resources [like water](#) and contribute to global carbon emissions. Because of that, unchecked demand for new electric cars will “reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries and urban centers and sacrifice places” where the materials are mined, says Hanjiro Ambrose, an engineer at the University of California, Davis Institute of Transportation Studies.

In an ideal world, each of those lithium-ion batteries stacked in the Oklahoma warehouse would be reused and recycled, ad infinitum, to create the lithium-ion batteries of 10, 25, even 50 years from now—with little new material required. Experts call this a “circular economy.” To make it work, recyclers are racing to come up with an efficient and planet-friendly way to reduce a used battery to its most valuable parts and then remake them into something new. Entrants include [Redwood Materials](#), a Nevada firm led by former Tesla executives; Europe's Northvolt; and Toronto-based Li-Cycle. Others plan to squeeze every possible electron from a battery before it's recycled by offering second or third uses after it comes out of a car.

In theory, [according to research](#) done in the lab of Alissa Kendall, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of California, Davis, recycled materials could supply more than half of the cobalt, lithium, and nickel in new batteries by 2040, even as EVs get more popular. The emerging EV

industry needs a smart end-of-life process for batteries, alongside widespread charging stations, trained auto technicians, and a fortified power grid. It's essential infrastructure, key to making our electrified future as green as possible. "We have to control these end-of-life batteries," says Kendall. "It shouldn't be a horror stream."

One thing appears certain: The current way of dealing with cars past their prime won't cut it. Cars are typically globe-trotters; the average vehicle may have three to four owners and cross international borders in its lifetime. When it finally dies, it falls into a globe-spanning network of auctioneers, dismantlers, and scrap yards that try to dispose of cars as profitably as possible. "These vehicles go to auction and anybody can grab them," Kendall says. "That's where the Wild West is."

Today's system mostly works because scrap metal has value and there's a healthy market for conventional auto parts. Dismantlers—including those that fly under the radar of regulators—make a fine art of wringing every penny from a dead car, explains Andy Latham, CEO of Salvage Wire, an auto recycling consultancy in the UK. That includes the lead-acid batteries that start gas-powered cars. More than 95 percent of them are recycled today because consumers can claim deposits when they return the batteries, and they are relatively simple to dismantle. Lithium-ion battery packs are, by contrast, heavy machines with dozens of components and radically different designs depending on their manufacturer. "The voltages in these batteries are lethal," says Latham, who trains salvagers just getting started with EVs. "People don't know the risks involved."

Extracting the valuable materials from an EV battery is difficult and expensive. The recycling process typically involves shredding batteries, then breaking them down further with heat or chemicals at dedicated facilities. That part is relatively simple. The harder part is getting dead batteries to those facilities from wherever they met their demise. [About 40 percent of the overall cost](#) of recycling, according to one recent study, is transportation. EV battery packs are so massive they need to be shipped by truck (*not* airplane) in specially designed cases, often across vast distances, to reach centralized recycling facilities. Handling lithium-ion batteries is so demanding that dealerships have chosen to ship an entire 4,000-pound damaged vehicle to Oklahoma City, just so SNT can extract and repair or recycle the 1,000-pound battery inside.

In all, the journey is so labor- and resource-intensive that it generally exceeds the costs of digging up new materials from the ground. Currently, the only battery material that can be recycled profitably is cobalt, because it's just that rare and expensive. For the same reason, many battery makers hope to eliminate it from their chemistries soon, threatening to make the value proposition for recyclers even harder.

"Recycling is not going to be profitable for everybody. That's fantasy economics," says Leo Raudys, CEO of Call2Recycle, a nonprofit that handles recycling logistics for dead batteries. Even cobalt-free batteries are toxic and a fire danger, though they still contain plenty of valuable materials, like lithium and nickel. But recycling them responsibly is simply less profitable.

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In short, whoever ends up with a dead battery will likely have to pay a recycler to take it off their hands. Raudys compares it to the early era of handling electronic waste, when producers and recyclers were caught on their haunches. "You still saw a lot of tube TVs end up in ditches," he says.

There's less risk of that for EV battery packs, Raudys says, in part because they are so big and hard to hide. A landfill won't take them knowingly because of fire risk. A massive pack dumped somewhere is easier to trace back to an owner, or at least to its manufacturer. That will help keep most battery packs on the path to being recycled.

Hans Eric Melin, the founder of Circular Energy Storage, a consultancy that focuses on battery life-cycle management, agrees. Time will solve multiple problems. As more batteries die, the economies of scale will drive down costs. Another key, Melin says, is locating battery makers and battery recyclers closer to each other. He notes that the most highly developed battery recycling industry is in China, where 70 percent of lithium-ion batteries are made. In North America and Europe, there's less manufacturing and

less recycling. But some automakers have [set up in-house](#) recycling programs to recover materials themselves, while recyclers are also thinking about battery making. In September, Redwood Materials said it would begin [building battery cathodes](#) from recovered metals.

Still, others say some batteries will “leak” from these systems and not be recycled immediately. Some electric cars will end up abroad, as some 40 percent of gas-powered vehicles currently do. It’s a common fate because cars deemed unfit for US roads can still be shipped overseas and sold at a steep discount. Melin says a small number of older EVs are already moving abroad. In his research, he found it easy to track down older models of the all-electric [Nissan Leaf](#) in Ukraine, where the company did not sell them until this summer.

Sending used cars abroad is an important way of making electric vehicles accessible to poorer countries, Melin notes. But it raises the question of whether these places are prepared for safe and environmentally sound recycling when the vehicles die. “We have evidence from the e-waste trade that there can be bad versions of recycling,” Kendall says, pointing to places like India and Southeast Asia. “It’s a misery.”

Closer to home, other EV batteries may “leak” into shadowy corners of the domestic auto industry, with players that don’t have the money or desire to deal with waste. One result is stockpiling batteries in the hopes that recycling costs will eventually fall or that the value of the batteries will rise. “Some of it is wishful thinking,” Kendall says. Sometimes, the batteries wind up with enthusiastic [but not always safety-minded](#) DIYers. That can be useful, because those DIYers are likely to squeeze more electrons out of used batteries by repurposing them for new applications, like at-home energy storage. But some battery packs are broken down into individual cells or modules for repurposing, which means they’re more likely to go missing.

Government will likely get involved, too, as it did with the deposit system for lead-acid batteries. Last year, the European Union [proposed regulations](#) that would require battery and car manufacturers to handle recycling batteries, regardless of who owns them at the end of their lives. “The dismantler can turn around and say, ‘I don’t want this thing in my yard. Here, take it away, Honda or Tesla or Toyota,’” explains Latham of Salvage Wire. New standards in the EU would also dictate how much of the precious metals inside of new batteries will need to be recycled from past devices, rather than virgin material.

Regulating the battery industry [requires a careful balance](#), explains Melin. Strict rules aimed at maximizing the greenness of EVs might slow the adoption of electric cars and lead to burning more fossil fuels—a far worse fate for the planet. A particular concern for automakers is a requirement with a high threshold of recycled materials to be included in new batteries; that could be difficult to achieve, especially in the near term, and could increase battery costs.

In the US, California’s Environmental Protection Agency has convened [an advisory committee](#) to consider potential rules for battery recycling. In recent meetings, automotive industry lobbyists have argued that whoever takes the battery out of a car at the end of its life should be responsible for ensuring that it makes it to a recycler, potentially aided by incentives. Automakers would serve as a backstop for the batteries that fall through the cracks.

In Oklahoma City, the batteries in the SNT warehouse mostly came from cars that are still under warranty, which means the automakers are responsible for them. Tyler Helps, the company’s head of business development, says automakers are paying SNT to keep their old batteries because they don’t know what the used battery market is going to look like and whether the materials inside the battery might be more valuable in the future. “So instead of the automakers saying, ‘I’m going to go and dispose of those materials,’ they say, ‘I’m just going to hold onto it,’” he says.

Sitting in a conference room just down the hall from the towers of batteries, Spiers himself expresses optimism. The last tenant of this warehouse was a company that constructed parts for oil pipelines, he points out. Now it’s owned by a company helping automakers ensure their electric cars are as green as they can be. They’re still figuring out the plan for many of the batteries in this warehouse, but Spiers

	<p>believes that in the end, they'll be viewed as an opportunity, not waste. "If you can build an economic model that works as a carrot, then it makes sense for the whole industry to work toward this goal," he says.</p> <p>"I think that is a much bigger motivator than regulation." He's motivated to get this right. There are, after all, big things at stake here—like the planet.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/01 CISA: Nov. is Infrastructure Security Month
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/infrastructure-security/cisa-kicks-off-infrastructure-security-month/
GIST	<p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) kicks off Infrastructure Security Month today. Throughout the month, the agency will use the theme "Build It In" to remind people of the importance of considering infrastructure security and resilience from design concept all the way through development and implementation.</p> <p>Much of the nation's critical infrastructure is interconnected and interdependent, which means an incident in one area can have impacts across multiple sectors, creating disruptions for many communities. Earlier this year, major cyberattacks caused issues up and down the supply chain. Because our nation relies on critical infrastructure for health, energy, communications, and other vital services, it is equally important that everyone understand their role and take action to ensure our critical infrastructure remains strong, secure, and functional.</p> <p>"Everyone has a part to play in protecting the nation's critical infrastructure," said CISA Executive Assistant Director for Infrastructure Security Dr. David Mussington. "This month, CISA asks organizations of all kinds to learn about their shared responsibility in critical infrastructure security and how they can 'Build It In.'"</p> <p>Each week will focus on a different aspect based on this theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1 (November 1-7): Interconnected and Interdependent Critical Infrastructure: Shared risk means building in shared responsibility. • Week 2 (November 8-14): Secure Public Gatherings: Build in security for mass gatherings starting with your planning. • Week 3 (November 15-21): Build Security and Resilience into Critical Infrastructure. • Week 4 (November 22-30): Secure Elections: Building resilience into our democratic processes. <p>For more information on Infrastructure Security Month and to access this year's toolkit, please visit CISA.gov. Follow along and engage with information and events across CISA's social media channels, such as Twitter (@CISAGov and @CISAIInfraSec), Facebook (@CISA), LinkedIn (@CISAGov), or Instagram (@CISAGov).</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Violence: some schools bring back police
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/2/rash-violence-has-some-schools-bringing-back-campus/
GIST	<p>Communities across the country are rethinking their decision to remove police from school campuses amid an uptick in incidents involving students, guns and fights.</p> <p>In Desert Springs, Nevada, local lawmakers who pulled police from five public high schools this year reversed their decision last month and renewed their contracts. A public outcry erupted after a student brought a knife to school and bullying, fights and gang violence increased.</p> <p>In Santa Cruz, California, public school officials returned a police officer to Aptos High School last month after the fatal stabbing of a student on campus in August.</p>

In Rochester, New York, leaders from four local education unions sent a letter last month asking public school district officials to reconsider their decision to remove police from schools. They cited recent reports of fighting, gang violence and shootings near campuses.

In the Washington area, officials in Alexandria, Virginia, backtracked last month on their decision in August to pull police from city schools after Superintendent Gregory Hutchings described “an escalation of disciplinary infractions.”

“We had a student that was shot down the street. We have a student that brought a loaded gun, almost, into our school building. We have a student that was shot this weekend as well,” Mr. Hutchings said at a City Council meeting on Oct. 13. “Those are facts. This is not anything that we’re making up.”

The cities are among dozens nationwide that reduced or removed police from schools in the aftermath of the death last year of George Floyd, a Black man who was killed by a White police officer in Minneapolis. Critics argued that putting police in schools is unnecessary and that the funding should go to other programs such as mental health services.

Mr. Hutchings, however, said the recent incidents have proved that Alexandria needs police in schools and that the city of more than 159,000 might not fit the “national narrative.”

National Police Association Betsy Brantner Smith told The Washington Times that programs placing police or “school resource officers” in schools became “one of the victims of the ridiculous ‘defund the police’ movement.”

The association, she said, believes school resource officers “throughout the nation should be reinstated and supported for the safety of not only children but for all school personnel.”

“Communities and police leaders must continue to fight the false narrative that law enforcement officers in schools are a ‘danger’ to children attending public school,” Ms. Brantner Smith said.

The retired police sergeant said officers have helped stop shootings and other crimes on campus and serve as role models and counselors for students.

The National Association of School Resource Officers reported that the number of gun-related incidents in schools from Aug. 1 to Oct. 1 more than tripled this year, from 29 to 97.

The nonprofit agreed with Ms. Brantner Smith. “Having a school resource officer in place who is actively cultivating relationships with students has prevented many incidents of school violence,” it said.

“Active shooter incidents have been disrupted before they ever started because of the work of SROs and the valuable role they play in the school safety community,” the association said.

Police in Delaware said last week that a 14-year-old boy brought a loaded gun to Smyrna Middle School but turned it over to a school resource officer. Authorities determined that the boy was having a mental health crisis and they were considering whether to press charges.

Meanwhile, officials in Montgomery County, Maryland, are sticking to their decision in August to remove police from buildings despite calling them for help in recent weeks.

Police responded to reports of gunshots near Seneca Valley High School, resulting in lockdowns and shelter-in-place orders twice last month. They also showed up when a fight broke out during a football game at the high school on Oct. 15. One student was sent to a hospital.

Monifa McKnight, interim superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, said last week that just “because we don’t have SROs in schools, [it] does not mean that we don’t have a relationship with the police department.”

	<p>“We have relied on our police to go out and investigate what’s going on in the community,” Ms. McKnight said during a virtual town hall. “Those examples really speak to why it’s important to continue with that relationship.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Activists: Indigenous voices missing Cop26
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/02/cop26-indigenous-activists-climate-crisis
GIST	<p>As world leaders inside the Cop26 conference centre in Glasgow boasted about pledges to slash greenhouse gas emissions and end deforestation, indigenous delegates gathered across the river Clyde to commemorate activists killed for trying to protect the planet from corporate greed and government inaction.</p> <p>At least 1,005 environmental and land rights defenders have been murdered since the Paris accords were signed six years ago, according to the international non-profit Global Witness. One in three of those killed were indigenous people.</p> <p>The dead include Berta Cáceres, winner of the prestigious Goldman prize for environmental defenders, who was shot dead at her home in Honduras in March 2016 for opposing the construction of an internationally financed dam on a river considered sacred by her Lenca people.</p> <p>As the names of the murdered defenders were projected on a large outdoor screen, indigenous activists from Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and the Philippines implored political leaders to listen to their struggles.</p> <p>“The Cop is a big business, a continuation of colonialism where people come not to listen to us, but to make money from our land and natural resources,” said Ita Mendoza, 46, an indigenous land defender from the Mixteca region of Oaxaca in southern Mexico, attending Cop for the first time. “What benefits does the Cop bring when more than a thousand people fighting to keep the planet alive have been killed [since Paris]?”</p> <p>Mendoza is part of the Futuros Indigenas (Indigenous Futures) collective from Mexico, who spent months crowdfunding to be able to attend Cop26 so their communities’ struggles and vision for protecting the planet might be heard.</p> <p>The collective did not get accreditation for the full two weeks, and as Cop first-timers are struggling to navigate the bureaucracy and structural barriers to their participation.</p> <p>Still, at least they made it. About two-thirds of civil society organizations who usually attend Cop could not come to Glasgow due to a combination of visa and accreditation problems, lack of access to Covid-19 vaccines and changing travel rules. Mostly absent are those from the global south – poorer, less industrialized nations who have contributed least to greenhouse gas emissions but are disproportionately harmed by increasingly intense extreme weather events linked to global heating such as drought, storms and floods.</p> <p>Their voices will be missed during the negotiations, but the problems run much deeper, according to multiple veteran Cop participants.</p> <p>In the 50 years since Cop began, international climate policies have mostly ignored or violated the cultural and territorial rights of indigenous peoples – despite them being recognized in 2001 as a formal constituency, one of nine broad thematic clusters (that also include business groups, environmental NGOs, women and youth groups and trade unions) permitted to observe and lobby negotiators.</p> <p>Then in 2015, the Paris accords legally recognized the crucial role of traditional knowledge and innovations by local communities and indigenous peoples in understanding and tackling the climate crisis.</p>

The move was meant to ensure they could participate and influence international climate policies in a more meaningful and equal way.

But six years on, indigenous people interviewed by the Guardian say little has changed inside the UN-led negotiations, while outside environmental destruction continues unchecked in their communities and the impact of the climate crisis is getting worse.

“Indigenous people are more visible but we’re not taken any more seriously; we’re romanticized and tokenized,” said Eriel Deranger, executive director of Indigenous Climate Action and member of the facilitated working group for North America, part of the new UN structures established after Paris.

“They’re trying to collect and preserve indigenous knowledge while continuing to leave us out of the actual decision-making and positions of power. It’s the only lever we have to hold states and governments accountable, but it’s the same paternalistic system as ever. We’re set up to fail, so that’s where civil society must come in.”

Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the North American Indigenous Environmental Network, who’s attended every Cop since 1998, said indigenous knowledge holders were being “co-opted and manipulated by the Eurocentric UN system”.

This week, [it was announced that \\$1.7bn will be](#) given to indigenous peoples and local communities in recognition of their key role in protecting the planet’s lands and forests.

Net-zero targets, the central theme of Cop26, revolve around incentivizing carbon capture markets through mass reforestation, biofuels and new technologies – which many indigenous leaders see as false climate solutions that will lead to further land grabs and environmental and cultural destruction. For them, keeping fossil fuels and minerals in the ground is the only way to curtail global heating and its devastating impacts.

Chief Ninawa Huni Kuwin, president of the Huni Kui People’s Federation of the Brazilian Amazon, added: “Our vision is very different to those who make the decisions at Cop. We have ancestral connections to the environment and Mother Earth. These are spiritual spaces that we would never negotiate or offset for money, but the working groups don’t represent the views of our communities or explain what these carbon markets actually mean.”

As the climate crisis intensifies with record floods, fires and heatwaves across the world, so does the violence against defenders. 2020 was the deadliest year on record for environmental and land defenders, with indigenous people accounting for half of the total 227 killed.

Many, like Cáceres, had been resisting environmentally destructive extractive industries and energy projects including pipelines, dams, industrial wind and solar farms, and African palm plantations.

Still, indigenous peoples have survived against the odds, and they are not giving up.

“It’s a testament of our resilience that even after hundreds of years of colonization and betrayal that we indigenous communities are still willing to sacrifice our lives, health and energy for this last-ditch attempt to save the planet,” said Ruth Miller, climate justice director of the Alaska-based Native Movement, a Dena’ina Athabaskan and Ashkenazi Russian Jewish woman, who is a member of the Curyung tribe.

“We’re here offering sustainable solutions to the rest of the world that require an ideological shift, not a green industry built on colonialism and repression. It’s up to them if they listen or not.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Australia, France diplomatic rift deepens
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/02/french-officials-vent-fury-over-australian-leak-of-macron-text-message

Elysée officials have expressed fury at the decision of Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, to [leak a private text message](#) from the French president, Emmanuel Macron, as the diplomatic rift between the two countries deepened.

“Confidence has been completely shattered,” a close adviser to Macron [told French media](#) on Tuesday. “Disclosing a text message exchange between heads of state or government is a pretty crude and unconventional tactic.”

The adviser told Le Parisien that it “would never even enter the head” of the French president to disclose communications of this kind. “It is not the kind of thing that is likely to improve relations between [France](#) and Australia,” they said.

In the text, two days before the announcement of the [Aukus](#) security partnership and the cancellation of a major French contract to supply submarines to Australia, Macron asked Morrison whether he could expect good or bad news on the submarines.

Its publication came after Macron [told reporters he “knew” that Morrison had lied to him](#) over plans with the US and the UK to acquire nuclear-propelled submarines. Morrison [rejected the claim](#) and said he was “not going to cop sledging of Australia”.

French media described the text message leak as “spectacular and extremely rare”, saying it appeared to be aimed at demonstrating that Macron had already been informed the contract might not go ahead even before it was torn up.

But the Elysée official insisted the text showed rather that Macron “did not know what stage the discussions had got to” just two days before Australia called off the A\$90bn (£49bn) deal for 12 conventionally powered submarines.

A second French government source told Agence-France Presse that if a message existed that clearly showed that Macron did in fact know, “they would have reported that instead”. The source added: “We knew the Australians had some issues, but they only concerned technical aspects and the timetable, as with every big contract.”

It was precisely those issues that the text message referred to, ahead of a discussion with submarine manufacturer Naval Group planned for the following day, the source said. It is not clear what response Morrison gave to the message.

The Elysée also rejected Canberra’s account that it made multiple attempts to contact Paris to warn of the impending announcement. The official told Le Parisien only one phone call had come through to the palace, at 11am on a Wednesday – during Macron’s weekly cabinet meeting.

“It is difficult to believe that the Australian prime minister has not been advised of this constraint,” the official said. “He knew very well the president was unavailable.”

It was later that same day, the adviser said, that Paris had learned that the contract was being rescinded and that a press conference was to be held during the afternoon. “It’s a curious way of going about things,” the Elysée source told Le Parisien.

“France was left with no opportunity to respond or to come up with a counter-proposition, which we had the means to do. Once again, it is not the choice that we denounce – that’s a sovereign decision. It’s the way of doing things.”

The Elysée also said that Morrison could have sought a reconciliatory meeting with Macron in recent days, at the G20 meeting in Rome or the Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow. “The president was waiting for a proposition from the prime minister, which did not come,” the source said.

	<p>Morrison spoke with Macron by phone last week, and the French president used that call to urge the Australian government to propose concrete steps to repair the relationship.</p> <p>Morrison insists that he “made very clear” to Macron at a dinner in Paris in mid-June “that a conventional diesel-powered submarine was not going to meet Australia’s strategic requirements”.</p> <p>But the Australian prime minister also said he wasn’t at liberty at that stage to disclose to Macron that Australia would work with the US and the UK to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, because those plans had not yet been finalised and were held “in confidence”.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Stiffer hospital penalty: no price-disclosure
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-raising-penalty-for-hospitals-that-dont-publish-prices-11635900197?mod=hp_lista_pos4
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Tuesday finalized a regulation that will sharply increase the financial penalties for larger hospitals that don’t make their prices public.</p> <p>The new rule, which will take effect at the start of 2022, will also crack down on practices that made hospitals’ prices hard to find and access, including the use of special coding embedded in hospital webpages that prevents Alphabet Inc.’s GOOG 1.45% Google and other search engines from displaying price pages in search results.</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal reported in March that hundreds of hospitals had embedded code in their disclosure webpages that kept them from being indexed by the search engines. The story is cited in the rule.</p> <p>Starting this year, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services required hospitals to disclose the prices they get for procedures.</p> <p>Under the disclosure requirements, hospitals are supposed to make public files that include the rates negotiated by insurers for their services along with cash prices, among other information. Many hospitals have been slow to comply.</p> <p>Under the new rule from CMS, penalties can go as high as around \$2 million a year for large hospitals that fail to make prices public.</p> <p>That is a sharp increase from the \$109,500 maximum a year per hospital under existing rules. For hospitals with 30 or fewer beds, penalties remain the same.</p> <p>“CMS is committed to promoting and driving price transparency, and we take seriously concerns we have heard from consumers that hospitals are not making clear, accessible pricing information available online, as they have been required to do since January 1, 2021,” said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure.</p> <p>The final rule’s provisions are similar to an earlier proposal.</p> <p>The American Hospital Association is very concerned by higher penalties after demands placed on hospitals in recent months from the pandemic and new rules, said Stacey Hughes, an AHA executive. The powerful trade group lost its legal challenge to stop the transparency rules in late 2020.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 SPS new timeline to clear homeless camp
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3216189/seattle-public-schools-timeline-bitter-lake-homeless-camp/
GIST	After months of delays, Seattle Public Schools has now established a timeline for the removal of a Bitter Lake homeless encampment.

Formerly homeless ‘first time fliers’ signal gradual removal of North Seattle encampment

The encampment has sat in a park neighboring Broadview K-8 for roughly six months, having been a flashpoint for parents and residents since it first appeared.

Over the course of two months during the spring, the school was put on lockdown at least twice — once in April after a firearm sighting, which turned out to be a pellet gun and led to no injuries, and again in May after a worker saw someone inside that he didn’t think should be in the school. There was also an overdose at the encampment. The man survived.

Seattle Public Schools erected a steel barricade between the encampment and Broadview-Thomson K-8 in August, while hiring a security detail, WDC Safety Team, affiliated with the Public Defender Association’s case management program CoLEAD.

In July, SPS indicated that it intended to have the encampment cleared by Sept. 1. That plan was put on hold in late-August, with the district stating its belief that simply clearing campers out without ensuring they were moved into housing was “not a sustainable solution to the problem at the Bitter Lake encampment.” That delay was further driven by the belief that more outreach work was needed.

Seattle School Board leaders have been adamant in their opposition to sweeping campers out of the area without first ensuring they’ll be able to place them in available shelters. That was outlined in a joint statement from Board President Chandra Hampson and Director Zachary DeWolf in early April, where they said that sweeps should “NEVER be performed on school grounds, adjacent or elsewhere in this City.”

Now, the plan is to “fully transition the Bitter Lake encampment residents to shelter or housing by mid-December.”

“Thanks to our partnership with the City of Seattle, King County and Anything Helps, outreach teams have begun moving people into shelter or housing,” SPS Assistant Superintendent Bev Redmond told MyNorthwest. “Those efforts will increase by the middle of this month as new shelter resources become available.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Hospital staffing losses lower than feared
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3213565/hospitals-post-vaccine-mandate/
GIST	<p>Two weeks after the vaccine mandate for health care workers went into effect, the state’s hospitals have barely felt a pinch.</p> <p>Hospital leaders had predicted that the hospitals on the eastern side of the state — where vaccination rates have tended to be lower — might lose so many workers that they would have to cancel services, such as dialysis.</p> <p>However, this has not been the case.</p> <p>“There has been some impact, but it’s been much lower than what we all feared that it could be,” said Beth Zbrowski, senior vice president of communications and engagement for the Washington State Hospital Association during the group’s regular briefing this week. “We’ve had a couple hospitals that have had to curtail a service or two, and they’ve been working on getting those patients care elsewhere.”</p> <p>Taya Briley, executive vice president of WSHA, explained that no hospital has had to cut off an entire type of service.</p>

“We’ve been managing much better than we thought we might, and where there are limitations on services, it’s more like folks can’t take as many patients as they might have been able to, but they aren’t having to shutter services altogether,” Briley said.

But while the vaccine mandate has not led to any prominent staffing losses, hospitals are still dealing with the ongoing staffing shortages that they have been seeing for months due to exhaustion and burnout. Besides the long hours and extra shifts, health care practitioners [have told KIRO Radio](#) that seeing the suffering of COVID patients during the fifth wave was especially emotionally draining because most of the people hospitalized were unvaccinated.

“Taking care of any sick patient is not easy, but when you see it in younger and younger patients, it really, really hurts your soul in a way that is difficult to describe,” said Dr. Karthikeyan Muthuswamy with Virginia Mason Franciscan Health in Lakewood.

He said he has seen more young people in critical care during the pandemic than in the entirety of his medical career — and most of these patients were unvaccinated.

That emotional burden is twofold.

“It’s been very difficult for health care providers who are dealing with this pandemic to feel like we have two battlefronts,” said Dr. Mary Fairchok, a pediatrician at Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital in Tacoma. “We have the battle in the hospital and the clinic every day, and we have the battle of misinformation.”

Hospitals have been able to help fill the void with traveling nurses and federally-contracted health workers. But there is still the worry that if cases start to rise again, hospitals could land right back in the scenes of August and September — when the combination of the state’s largest COVID surge and staffing challenges meant that, in some cases patients with appendicitis and strokes [had to wait for care](#).

Unfortunately, while cases and hospitalizations have dropped significantly since then, the [decline appears to have stopped](#). Briley is nervous that a plateau could be a precursor to an increase in cases again — and if that happens, we are not starting from a low number.

“We don’t like where we are plateauing,” Briley said. “Right now, COVID-19 hospitalizations are around 1,000 in Washington state on any given day, compared to 300 and 350 last June and July.”

She explained that numbers like that are equal to last winter’s third wave — which, until the delta variant came along, was the largest surge the state had seen.

“One-thousand hospitalizations per day was the peak of the surge that we had in December of 2020,” she said. “And at that time, we introduced significant additional mitigation measures to try to get the COVID-19 numbers under control.”

During the December 2020 surge, as restaurants went back to takeout only and stores limited capacity, health officials advised families not to get together for the holidays. This year, with the availability of vaccines, the recommendations are a little more flexible.

“It’s so hard for me to tell people two years in a row, ‘Don’t go see your family for Christmas and Thanksgiving,’” said Muthuswamy. “So, just, please be careful, take the right precautions, and keep the gatherings as small as possible.”

Muthuswamy, along with the CDC, advises that any family members getting together for holidays who are eligible for vaccines — including not just the COVID vaccine, but the booster and a flu shot — get them well in advance of gathering. That recommendation also extends to children ages 5 to 11, who are expected to become eligible for the Pfizer vaccine within the next week or two.

Doctors expect to see the most vaccine hesitancy yet from parents as the 5-to-11-year-olds become eligible.

“Although it may be tempting to dismiss the idea of vaccinating the [5]-to-11-year-old age group because they are the group at the lowest risk for things like hospitalizations and death, we shouldn’t be minimizing that,” Fairchok said.

She explained that Mary Bridge saw a large increase in children hospitalized with COVID during the summer’s delta surge, including 45 children with the COVID complication [multisystem inflammatory syndrome](#). This rare but serious side effect of COVID tends to affect kids and can cause dangerous heart and lung problems; Fairchok said most of those Mary Bridge patients who had it ended up in the ICU.

“[COVID-19] was still the sixth leading cause of death for 4-11-year-olds during Delta. Kids at this age are not supposed to die,” Fairchok said. “So they still are dying of coronavirus, they still are being hospitalized. We still have the problems with the [multisystem inflammatory syndrome], around 7-8% of them are experiencing long COVID. ”

Dr. John Hawes, a pediatrician with Swedish Medical Center, assured parents that the vaccine is safe.

“It’s been tested on several thousand kids in this age group and there hasn’t been a single serious side effect in the children age 5 to 11,” Hawes said.

While there have been extremely [rare cases](#) in adolescents of [myocarditis](#) — the inflammation of the heart muscle — after receiving the vaccine, Fairchok explained that that has mostly been in teenage boys, and was not once seen in the children’s vaccine trials. And even in this higher-risk group, she said, the rate of heart complications from COVID is four times higher. Multisystem inflammatory syndrome is just one example of the serious problems that kids can get from COVID.

“If we’re refusing to use a very effective weapon against it, it’s like trying to fight the virus with one hand tied behind our backs, and why would we want to do that?” Fairchok said. “I shudder to think what delta would have been like had we not had the vaccination.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Covid cases Snohomish Co. rising
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3215461/after-steady-decline-covid-cases-in-snohomish-county-are-rising/
GIST	<p>For seven consecutive weeks, Snohomish County reported a progressive decline in COVID cases. That trend ended abruptly with a two week period ending Oct.23.</p> <p>The county’s health department is reporting an uptick in its COVID case rate, increasing from 331 to 351 per 100,000.</p> <p>The demographic breakdown of the case rate is significant: The majority of new cases were reported among high school age children, and 22% of new cases were among those 14 and younger.</p> <p>Health directors in both Snohomish and King counties are saying that the data is a clear indicator that unvaccinated individuals are the most likely to contract COVID.</p> <p>Vaccine statistics are largely correlated with age. Snohomish County reports that only 51.9% of children between the ages of 12-15 are vaccinated.</p> <p>Children under the age of 11 are still not eligible for the COVID vaccine. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave Pfizer emergency approval authorization for its small dose vaccine for children Oct. 29, the American Academy of Pediatrics is awaiting approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention before it makes the decision to formally recommend the vaccine for children aged 5-11.</p>

The Washington State Department of Health [reports](#) that Snohomish County experienced 74 outbreaks in schools between Aug. 1 and Sept. 30. King County experienced 24 outbreaks (an outbreak is defined epidemiologically as confirmation of transmission from a single source).

“This is thanks to the strong, ongoing collaboration between the public and private K-12 schools in Snohomish County and our robust schools response team,” wrote Dr. Chris Spitters, Health Officer for the Snohomish Health District, in a press release. “We have a relatively low threshold for declaring an outbreak to get to cases and identify close contacts sooner, and the schools are also quick to implement additional mitigation measures. This all works to help keep transmission from spreading.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 CDC recommends vaccine younger children
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/health/covid-vaccine-children-cdc.html
GIST	<p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday formally endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine for children aged 5 through 11, a move that will buttress defenses against a possible surge as winter arrives and ease the worries of tens of millions of pandemic-weary parents.</p> <p>At a meeting earlier in the day, a panel of scientific advisers had unanimously recommended that the vaccine be given to these children. Inoculations could begin as soon as this week.</p> <p>“Together, with science leading the charge, we have taken another important step forward in our nation’s fight against the virus that causes Covid-19,” Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the C.D.C., said in a statement Tuesday night.</p> <p>The C.D.C.’s endorsement arrives just as Americans prepare for a potentially risky holiday season. Cases in the United States have been falling steadily for weeks, but experts have warned that indoor gatherings may send the rates soaring again. Many Americans seem determined to celebrate; already airlines are bracing for what may be the busiest travel season since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>While relatively few of the 29 million children in this age group will be fully immunized a month from now, even partial vaccination will provide some protection against the coronavirus. Every million doses given to children ages 5 to 11 would prevent about 58,000 cases and 226 hospitalizations in that group, according to the C.D.C.</p> <p>Immunizing these children is expected to prevent about 600,000 new cases from November 2021 to March 2022. And rising immunity may reduce the chances that young children will transmit the virus to vulnerable adults in their families and communities, health officials noted.</p> <p>Vaccinations of younger children are likely to help keep schools open. Virus outbreaks forced about 2,300 schools to close between early August and October, affecting more than 1.2 million students, according to data presented at the committee meeting.</p> <p>The pandemic has also stalled routine immunizations, widened education gaps and escalated rates of anxiety and depression among children. “Vaccination of children ages 5 to 11 years will not only help prevent Covid-19 infection and serious consequences of infection in this age group, but will also help children emotionally and socially,” said Dr. Pamela Rockwell, who represents the American Academy of Family Physicians on the C.D.C. panel.</p> <p>Still, about three in 10 parents say they will definitely not get the vaccine for their 5- to 11-year-old child, according to the most recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Only about three in 10 parents said they would immunize their child “right away,” a percentage that has barely budged since similar polls in July and September.</p> <p>Many other parents are eager to see their children vaccinated as quickly as possible. Anticipating the C.D.C.’s decision, the Biden administration has enlisted more than 20,000 pediatricians, family doctors</p>

and pharmacies to administer the shots. About 15 million doses are already being shipped to vaccination sites across the country, federal officials said on Monday.

Children ages 5 to 11 will receive one-third of the dose authorized for those 12 and older, and the vaccine will be delivered with smaller needles and packaged in smaller vials to avoid a mix-up with adult doses. About half of the parents in the Kaiser poll said they worried about mandates that would force them to inoculate their children. Schools in all 50 states already require certain vaccines, but those have full approvals from the F.D.A. Covid vaccines for children have only been given emergency authorizations thus far.

California this month became the first state to say it would [require children](#) who attend public and private schools in the state to be immunized as early as next fall — but only after the vaccine is fully approved by the F.D.A. Even in states with mandates, some students may be able to opt out by citing medical reasons or religious beliefs.

Before they met, advisers to the F.D.A. and the C.D.C. were bombarded by thousands of emails offering misinformation about the vaccine and asking the experts to vote against it.

One common objection holds that because children rarely get sick from the virus, the vaccine's potential harms may outweigh its benefits. But the risk to children is not zero, C.D.C. scientists noted at the meeting.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than 8,300 children ages 5 to 11 have been hospitalized with Covid, and at least 94 have died. About one-third of the hospitalized children were sick enough to be admitted to intensive care units.

Almost 10 percent of children with mild symptoms may have lingering problems months after the infection has resolved. And at least 2,300 children ages 5 to 11 have developed a condition called multisystem inflammatory syndrome following infection.

The C.D.C.'s advisers also evaluated data on the vaccine's risks. There was enough information to conclude that the benefits of the vaccine outweighed the risks, even without more long-term safety data, said Dr. Matthew Daley, a senior investigator at Kaiser Permanente Colorado.

"If we wait, we miss the chance to prevent many cases of Covid-19 in this age group, and that includes some very severe cases," he said.

In a clinical trial of the vaccine in children, Pfizer initially tested the full adult dose and two smaller doses. The company settled on the smallest — one-third of the adult dose — because it had the fewest side effects and yet produced at least as many antibodies as observed in young adults who had been given the larger dose.

The vaccine had an efficacy of more than 90 percent in children ages 5 through 11, according to Dr. Alejandra Gurtman, a vice president at Pfizer, who presented the data at the meeting. Some children experienced fever, headache and fatigue, the same side effects seen in the older groups.

The F.D.A. had asked Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna to expand the size of their pediatric trials in order to detect less common side effects of the vaccines. Even so, the Pfizer-BioNTech trial was not large enough to detect rare adverse events.

Experts on the C.D.C. panel spent some time deliberating a rare side effect of vaccination called myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle. The risk is highest in males ages 16 to 29, but even in that group, a majority recover quickly.

The risk appears to decline in children 12 to 15, and is expected to be even lower in younger children, experts said at the meeting. Covid itself is [far more likely](#) to cause myocarditis, and a more severe version of it, studies have shown.

The C.D.C. has not definitively linked any deaths from myocarditis to vaccination, said Dr. Matthew Oster, a C.D.C. scientist who presented myocarditis data at the meeting. “Getting Covid, I think, is much riskier to the heart than this vaccine, no matter what age or sex,” Dr. Oster said.

Given the millions of Americans who are still unvaccinated, immunizing younger children is unlikely to bring the country to the “herd immunity” threshold — the point at which virus transmission stalls. Still, vaccinating children may help to curtail virus spread by giving the virus fewer entryways into the community.

And it may help to protect people who don’t respond well to the vaccine, such as organ transplant recipients, cancer patients and others with [impaired immune responses](#).

“Too many children have either lost a parent or become orphaned in this pandemic, which is incredibly tragic,” said Dr. Camille Kotton, who cares for immunocompromised people at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Results from the Pfizer vaccine’s trial in children under age 5 are not expected until the end of this year at the earliest. Last week, Moderna said its vaccine produced a [potent immune response](#) in children ages 6 through 11 who received half the adult dose.

Moderna requested authorization from the F.D.A. for use of its vaccine in children ages 12 to 17 years in June. The F.D.A. has not yet made a decision on that application, and is reviewing reports linking the vaccine to myocarditis, [the company said](#) on Sunday.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Military grants few exemptions: deadline
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/us/politics/vaccine-military-army.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Two months after the Pentagon began requiring all troops to get the coronavirus vaccine or face dismissal, the vast majority have now had shots, in part because none received a religious exemption, military officials said.</p> <p>While vaccine exemptions are often broadly worded, requests based on religious beliefs are coming under close scrutiny in the military and at the Department of Veterans Affairs, the first federal agency to impose a mandate. They will likely be followed by the rest of the federal government, where most workers are required to be vaccinated by the end of this month. The Biden administration will release a federal vaccine requirement for private companies with 100 or more employees “in coming days,” a representative for the Department of Labor said this week.</p> <p>The widespread federal and private sector mandates pose a test for the country, and the military and Veterans Affairs are being closely watched by companies and legal experts. Across the country, there are at least 40 legal challenges to vaccine and testing mandates issued by cities, hospitals, universities and other employers that have yet to move forward, while others have been knocked back.</p> <p>A federal appellate court removed a temporary injunction last week that had allowed health care workers in New York to seek religious exemptions to the state’s mandate.</p> <p>The Defense Department has granted a smattering of exemptions, including to people who were already leaving the military or have medical issues. However, some of those exemptions, like for people who recently had the coronavirus, may soon be reversed. Officials declined to say how many service members had requested an exemption but said the number was not large.</p>

“I don’t see the courts interfering with the vaccines in any other context than possibly religious exemptions,” said Dorit Rubinstein Reiss, a law professor and expert on vaccine mandates at the University of California, San Francisco. “But I don’t know if courts will be willing to second-guess the military.”

The leaders of most major religious organizations have recommended that their members get the vaccine. Officials say that no one is actively discouraging people in the military from seeking a religious exemption. But anyone seeking one from the Pentagon or Department of Veterans Affairs would be required to have an established history of adherence to a religion that prohibits vaccines, among other things.

“If members of the military want to apply for one, then they should be able to,” said John Kirby, a spokesman for the Pentagon. “And they should be able to make their case.”

About 97 percent of the country’s 1.3 million active-duty service members have had at least one dose of the vaccine, and roughly 87 percent have had both shots. The Air Force, which this week became the first division to hit the deadline for its mandate for full vaccination, will release its latest vaccine data on Wednesday. About 11,000 of its 326,855 active-duty personnel are likely still unvaccinated and facing possible expulsion.

At the Department of Veterans Affairs, where thousands of workers who interact with patients were supposed to be fully vaccinated by Oct. 8, officials have taken a dim view of such exemptions. Since the department issued a vaccine mandate for its 115,000 frontline health care workers this past summer, about 88 percent of the 380,000 employees covered by the mandate have had at least one dose, falling short of officials’ hopes for nearly full vaccination.

In hospitals or nursing homes with particularly vulnerable populations, “I think that there will be a point there where it is an undue burden on us to ensure safety in the provision of health care,” said Denis McDonough, the secretary of the department, “at which point we’re going to have to deny religious exceptions.”

Vaccine reluctance in the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs mirrors that of civilian society, where vaccine rates are largely lower without such mandates. Some people have embraced vaccine conspiracy theories or have been fearful of possible side effects, or do not see themselves at risk for the virus.

Over the summer, as the Delta variant surged, military officials became alarmed at the growing number of deaths; more active duty members died from the virus in the fall than in all of 2020, and none of them were vaccinated. In total, 71 service members have died. The Navy has led the charge with vaccinations, and roughly 99 percent in the service have had at least one shot ahead of the deadline to be fully vaccinated by the end of the month. Sailors were made acutely aware of the dangers of the virus early in the pandemic when an outbreak occurred on an aircraft carrier deployed to the Pacific Ocean. The captain, who pleaded with the Pentagon for help, was later fired.

There is a “common understanding that we often work in congregate settings such as shipboard environments and it is understood that in these settings, infectious diseases can spread very rapidly,” said Capt. Robert Hawkins, who leads the Navy Medicine’s Commander’s Action Group. “Immunizations have played a large role in readiness to conduct our mission for a long time, so we have had an understanding of their role in protecting our health and mission.”

In the Marines and the Army, about 93 percent of all active-duty troops have been at least partially vaccinated. Each service branch set its own deadlines and complex disciplinary procedures for those who decline shots, including extensive counseling sessions with clergy and commanders.

Still, only a doctor can give a medical exemption. “It’s a lawful order,” Mr. Kirby said of the vaccine mandate, and commanders have the right to “ultimately do what they need to do for the readiness of their

unit, and if that comes to doing something of a punitive nature, they certainly have that right and that authority.”

On a military subgroup on the social news and message board site Reddit, people swapped advice on how to talk to those who were resisting a vaccine, from offering scientific evidence to refuting claims that vaccines stem from aborted fetal cells to noting that troops take far more dangerous risks in combat. Stressing health and safety and readiness is always better than threatening expulsion, commanders say.

The private sector is clearly watching. Many companies, including United Airlines, Procter & Gamble, 3M and IBM, already have mandates, and several have indicated they will allow for “limited” medical or religious exceptions. Almost a dozen states have joined a lawsuit to prevent federal mandates from going forward.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Virus surging on Navajo Nation despite vax
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/02/world/kids-vaccine-covid-children#virus-navajo-vaccination-rates
GIST	<p>The Navajo Nation managed to tame Covid-19 earlier this year, mounting a campaign that drove its vaccination rate far above the United States average, after the virus ravaged the Navajo people.</p> <p>But now the nation — the largest reservation in the United States — is enduring yet another virus surge, and experts and tribal leaders aren’t sure why. Other highly vaccinated tribes are also contending with a resurgent virus.</p> <p>Over the course of the pandemic, the Navajo went from having one of the country’s worst case rates in the spring of 2020 to being lauded in September by Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease official, as an “example of success” in its fight against Covid-19. The rate of fully vaccinated tribal members — 70 percent, according to tribal data — is substantially higher than the nationwide rate of 58 percent.</p> <p>Indigenous leaders around the country have pushed hard to vaccinate their communities, knowing that Covid has had a disproportionate effect on Native American people, who now have the highest vaccination rate in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Despite their successes in overcoming mistrust in the federal government and inoculating hard-to-reach communities, the Navajo and other highly vaccinated tribes find themselves experiencing yet another virus surge.</p> <p>In addition to the Navajo Nation in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, the Indian Health Service said on Friday that it is seeing “intermittent” increases in the Billings area, covering Montana and Wyoming, and the Great Plains area, covering the Dakotas, Nebraska and Iowa. It said that tribal communities — though they tend to have high vaccination rates — are affected by the surrounding states and communities, which may have much lower vaccination rates.</p> <p>Many tribal members also commute to work in urban areas or border towns, where they may be at higher risk of exposure.</p> <p>The Blackfeet Nation of Montana, which has vaccinated nearly every eligible member, experienced a spike in August after recording few to no cases for weeks. That was after the tribe, confident after its successful vaccination campaign, voted to welcome back tourists by reopening its roads into the eastern section of the popular Glacier National Park. Cases are running relatively high among the Blackfeet as the virus surges throughout Montana, where vaccination rates in counties surrounding the reservation are as low as 38 percent.</p> <p>In Minnesota, the White Earth Nation, where 60 percent of eligible members are vaccinated, recently recorded its highest-ever surge in daily cases, said Ed Snetsinger, the tribe’s emergency manager.</p>

As for the Navajo, officials said the latest spike has been less severe than the nation's first two, which came last winter and in the spring of 2020, because 70 percent of eligible members are vaccinated.

The nation has exceeded 100 confirmed cases in a day several times recently, according to [tribal data](#). Confirmed cases peaked at almost 400 a day in the winter, and reached a low point in [single digits](#) in June and July.

The [Navajo Nation](#) is the largest U.S. tribe, with an official enrollment of nearly 400,000 members as of May.

Jonathan Nez, the president of the Navajo Nation, said that some members brought the virus back to the reservation after visiting neighboring communities in Arizona and New Mexico, which have looser Covid regulations than the tribe does. The Navajo have been [required to wear masks](#) in public since April last year, indoors and out, but there is no such outdoor mandate in surrounding areas.

"We do have multigeneration families living under one roof, and when someone brings Covid home, it spreads quickly in the house," Mr. Nez said in an interview last week.

While tribes have largely been successful in vaccinating their members, pockets of people continue to resist getting the shots, said Dr. Mary Owen, the director of the Center for American Indian and Minority Health at the University of Minnesota medical school and president of the Association of American Indian Physicians.

"These pockets seem to be greater in the 17- to 45-year-old range," said Dr. Owen, who is Tlingit. "From what I'm hearing and what I'm seeing in our clinic, is that people in this age group have a greater sense of invincibility and also seem to be relying more on social media for their news about the vaccine."

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HEADLINE	11/02 Land travelers warned: have vax documents
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/02/world/kids-vaccine-covid-children#us-land-border-travel
GIST	<p>American officials on Tuesday warned that the reopening of international land borders next week could lead to longer wait times at ports of entry and asked that travelers have their travel and vaccine documents readily available for border officials.</p> <p>On Monday, U.S. land borders will reopen to authorized adults who can show proof that they are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. Unvaccinated children under 18 will be allowed in if they are traveling with a fully vaccinated adult, officials said on Tuesday.</p> <p>This applies to travelers crossing at official ports of entry, as well as those arriving by passenger train. Officials said it did not matter if the proof of vaccination was in a language other than English.</p> <p>The long-awaited reopening on Nov. 8 comes just ahead of the holiday season, clearing the way for tourists and other nonessential travelers after about 19 months of border closures during the pandemic. It follows a recent decision by the Biden administration to reopen the country to vaccinated foreigners traveling by air. While a negative coronavirus test is required to enter the country by air, that will not be the case for crossing land borders. The border has been open to essential travel for legal trade, emergency response and medical reasons.</p> <p>The United States saw a record number of illegal border crossings in the past 12 months, which officials blame, in part, on misinformation spread by smuggling networks to vulnerable migrants, telling them incorrectly that American borders were open.</p> <p>Border officials reiterated on Tuesday that authorities continue to expel migrants who cross the border illegally, authorized under the public health rule that was put in place at the beginning of the pandemic.</p>

	<p>“Any foreign national attempting to enter the United States other than at a lawful port of entry or without proper documents will be subject to border restrictions, including expulsions,” said Matthew Davies, the executive director of admissibility and passenger programs at Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>The proof of vaccination can be electronic or on paper, officials said, but the vaccine has to be one cleared by U.S. regulators or for emergency use by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>A fair number of Mexican people have been vaccinated with drugs that do not have W.H.O. authorization, like Sputnik V, developed in Russia, or the CanSino vaccine from China.</p> <p>Reopening the country to vaccinated air and land travelers has been a welcome development for businesses, many of which have suffered because of the pandemic-driven closures.</p> <p>In 2019, more than half of the 20.7 million people who visited the United States from Canada traveled across land borders, according to the U.S. Travel Association, a trade group. And more than 15 million people traveled to the United States across the land border with Mexico.</p> <p>Canada reopened its land borders in August, and Mexico’s never closed.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Russia hits daily record virus deaths
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/02/world/kids-vaccine-covid-children#russia-hits-a-daily-record-for-coronavirus-deaths
GIST	<p>The official daily death toll from the coronavirus in Russia hit a record of 1,178 on Tuesday as the authorities urged the public to get vaccinated and signaled that a partial lockdown could be extended in some regions.</p> <p>Russia is in the middle of a vicious fourth wave of the coronavirus, which is wreaking havoc in a population that is largely unvaccinated and distrustful of government interventions to slow the spread. The police have opened 503 criminal investigations into the distribution of fake vaccine certificates since July and have shut down more than 2,000 websites peddling them, the Interior Ministry said on Tuesday.</p> <p>President Vladimir V. Putin has declared this week to be a “nonworking” period, with nonessential workers encouraged to stay home and employers encouraged to pay them at least the minimum wage to do so. In some regions, including Moscow, restaurants, bars and other businesses are closed. There were signals that the restrictions might extend beyond seven days, but the Kremlin said on Tuesday that no official decisions had been confirmed.</p> <p>Nonetheless, Anna Popova, a senior health official, said on Monday, “The effect from the measures being taken, and the ones that have been taken, will not come immediately.”</p> <p>“It is likely that more time will be needed,” she added.</p> <p>Russia’s coronavirus task force has been reporting more than 1,000 daily deaths since mid-October, for a total of 240,871 since the pandemic’s beginning, though those numbers undercount the true toll. The government’s statistics agency, which provides its own monthly figures, said last week that it had recorded at least 44,265 coronavirus deaths in September, and some 462,000 in total.</p> <p>Less than half of Russian adults are vaccinated, according to the official statistics, a figure that may be difficult to lift, considering that 45 percent have no plans to get a shot, according to the independent polling center Levada. Analysts say that mixed government messaging and public distrust are to blame — the Russian vaccine Sputnik V has been widely available for months.</p>

	A mass text message sent out by the Moscow city government on Tuesday said, “You can protect your close ones by signing them up for a vaccine.” It noted that one out of every nine people older than 60 who contracted Covid was dying and that vaccinated people were eligible to receive a cash prize of 10,000 rubles, or about \$140.
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HEADLINE	11/02 Ethiopia declares state of emergency
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/world/africa/ethiopia-state-of-emergency.html
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — Ethiopia declared a state of emergency on Tuesday and called on its citizens to pick up arms and prepare to defend the capital as rebel forces from the northern region of Tigray pressed south toward the city following the capture of two key towns.</p> <p>The Tigrayans, who have been fighting the government for the past year, have joined forces with another rebel group as they advance on the capital, Addis Ababa. Foreign officials monitoring the fighting said there were signs that several Ethiopian Army units had collapsed or retreated.</p> <p>The state of emergency reflected the rapidly changing tide in a metastasizing war that threatens to tear apart Ethiopia, Africa’s second-most populous country.</p> <p>It also marked another dismal turn in the fortunes of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a Nobel Peace Prize winner whose international reputation has been battered by a war that has led to reports of human rights violations, massacres and famine.</p> <p>One year ago, in the early hours of Nov. 4, Mr. Abiy launched a military campaign in the northern Tigray region, hoping to vanquish the regional ruling party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front — his most troublesome political foe. But after promising a swift, even bloodless campaign, Mr. Abiy was quickly drawn into a military quagmire.</p> <p>The Ethiopian military suffered a major defeat in June when it was forced to withdraw from Tigray, and several thousand of its soldiers were taken captive. Now the fighting is rapidly moving toward Mr. Abiy.</p> <p>In recent days, Tigrayan rebels took the towns of Dessie and Kombolcha, just 160 miles to the northeast of the capital. A United Nations official said the Tigrayan forces were seen moving farther south from Kombolcha on Tuesday.</p> <p>Under the state of emergency, Mr. Abiy has sweeping powers to arrest and detain critics, impose curfews and restrict the news media. Any citizen over 18 could be called into the fight, Justice Minister Gedion Timothewos told a news conference.</p> <p>“Those who own weapons will be obliged to hand them over to the government,” he said. The state of emergency will last six months, the government said.</p> <p>Hours earlier, the city administration in Addis Ababa had called on citizens to use their weapons to defend their neighborhoods. House-to-house searches were being conducted in search of Tigrayan sympathizers, it said in a statement.</p> <p>The announcements added to a growing sense of trepidation in the city, where tensions have been building for days as news filtered in of Tigrayan military advances. A taxi driver named Dereje, who in the capital’s tense climate refused to give his second name, said he intended to join in the fight.</p> <p>“I am not going to sit in my house and wait for the enemy,” he said. “I will fight for my kids and my country.”</p>

But a teacher, who declined to give his name, said he had lost faith in the Ethiopian government. “They lied to us that T.P.L.F. have been defeated,” he said, referring to the Tigray People’s Liberation Front. “I am terribly worried about what is going to happen. May God help us.”

President Biden, who has threatened to impose sanctions on Ethiopia unless it moves toward peace talks, said Tuesday he would revoke trade privileges for Ethiopia, including duty-free access to the United States because of “gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”

In a separate briefing, Jeffrey Feltman, the Biden administration’s envoy to the Horn of Africa, told reporters that the deepening conflict could have “disastrous consequences” for Ethiopia’s unity and its ties to the United States.

Billene Seyoum, a spokeswoman for Mr. Abiy, did not respond to a request for comment.

Ethiopia’s Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration said in a statement that the decision to revoke trade privileges would reverse economic gains in Ethiopia “and unfairly impact and harm women and children.” Ethiopia is committed to bringing perpetrators of serious rights abuses to justice, it added.

The deteriorating situation in Ethiopia has sent alarm across the region, with fears that the fighting could spill into neighboring countries such as Kenya, or send waves of refugees across borders.

A darling of the West after he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, Mr. Abiy has grown increasingly defensive in the past year as the war spilled out of Tigray, and once-close allies have subjected him to withering criticism.

That criticism has recently focused on Ethiopia’s punishing blockade of Tigray, which has prevented most supplies of food and medicine from reaching a region where the United Nations estimates that 5.2 million people urgently need help and 400,000 are living in famine-like conditions.

After the United States threatened Mr. Abiy’s government with sanctions in September, he accused the West of neocolonial bias and expelled seven senior U.N. officials, including a humanitarian aid coordinator in Tigray.

Last month, the Ethiopian military launched an offensive against Tigrayan forces that expanded to include airstrikes against the region’s besieged capital, Mekelle. In recent days, Mr. Abiy has blamed his losses on unidentified foreigners he says are fighting alongside the Tigrayans.

“Black and white nationals of non-Ethiopian descent have participated in the war,” he said.

In Addis Ababa, the security forces started a new roundup of ethnic Tigrayans, stoking fears of ethnically based reprisals in the capital as the rebels draw near.

International efforts to coax the sides to the negotiating table have come to nothing. Mr. Abiy has pushed ahead with military operations, despite mounting evidence that his army has come under crushing strain.

The Tigrayans, for their part, say they are fighting to break a siege that is strangling their region and starving their people.

Western pressure on Mr. Abiy has amounted to little more than “drips,” General Tsadkan Gebretensae, the rebels’ top strategist, told The New York Times last month. “We need more than drips.”

Human rights groups have also accused Tigrayan fighters of abuses, including the killing of Eritrean refugees, although not on the same scale as Ethiopian troops. The Ethiopian government accused Tigrayan fighters of killing “youth residents” in Kombolcha in recent days, but provided no evidence.

They have been pushing south, into Amhara region, since July, in a grinding battle that has unfolded largely out of sight as a result of internet blackouts and reporting restrictions.

The breakthrough came with the capture this weekend of Dessie and Kombolcha, strategically located towns on a highway running from north to south that has become the spine of a war that could determine the future of Ethiopia.

As they push south, the Tigrayans have linked up with the Oromo Liberation Army, a far smaller rebel group fighting for the rights of the Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group.

After years of battle in the bush, the O.L.A. appears to be moving into Ethiopia's towns.

Odaa Tarbii, an O.L.A. spokesman, said Tuesday it had captured a town 120 miles north of Addis Ababa and expected to start moving south, alongside the Tigrayans, in two or three days.

For much of the war Mr. Abiy enjoyed staunch support from neighboring Eritrea, whose fighters entered Tigray in the conflict's early weeks in late 2020, and were accused of many of the worst atrocities against civilians.

But in recent weeks, for reasons that are unclear, the Eritreans have been nowhere to be seen in the latest fighting, Tigrayan and Western officials said.

Getachew Reda, a spokesman for the Tigray People's Liberation Front, said the Ethiopian military was falling into disarray as it retreated south, leaving behind bands of heavily armed ethnic militias.

"The command and control structure has collapsed," he said, in an account that was broadly confirmed by two Western officials who could not be identified because of diplomatic sensitivities.

If the Tigrayans continue to push south, the officials added, Mr. Abiy is likely to face immense pressure from inside his political camp, as well as on the battlefield.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Palestinian families reject eviction deal
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/world/middleeast/palestinian-jerusalem-eviction-jarrah.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — A group of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem whose looming eviction led to an 11-day war in Gaza rejected a compromise on Tuesday that would have allowed them to stay in their homes for several decades if they agreed to pay nominal rent to a Jewish settler group that courts have ruled are the buildings' real owners.</p> <p>The four families from Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem that was annexed by Israel after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, said in a statement that they were rejecting the deal. The agreement, proposed by Israel's highest court, did not recognize them as the owners of their homes, they said, and it would obscure what they perceive as a wider Israeli strategy to displace Palestinians from East Jerusalem.</p> <p>If they had accepted the deal, "our dispossession would still be imminent, and our homes would still be regarded as someone else's," the families said. "Such 'deals' distract from the crime at hand, ethnic cleansing perpetrated by a settler-colonial judiciary and its settlers."</p> <p>The threat of their eviction was one reason that Hamas, the militant group that controls the Gaza Strip, fired rockets at Jerusalem in May — starting a brief conflict that killed more than 250 people in Gaza and 13 in Israel, and set off ethnic violence in several Israeli cities.</p> <p>The Israeli government has characterized the standoff in Sheikh Jarrah as simply a property dispute between private individuals. Palestinians see the case as emblematic of an Israeli effort to cement control</p>

over the eastern half of the city, ultimately making it harder for East Jerusalem to become the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Some settler leaders [have said](#) that their goal was to move Jewish residents into strategic eastern areas, like Sheikh Jarrah, to undermine Palestinian claims to the city. In recent decades, settler groups have moved into several neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, prompting [dozens of eviction battles](#).

In the days before their decision, the Sheikh Jarrah residents had been under sustained pressure from Palestinian politicians and activists to reject the deal, and had initially been divided among themselves about how to respond to it, according to residents and community activists.

Their rejection of the proposed compromise could lead the court to uphold an earlier decision to evict them. No court hearing has been set for the judges to respond.

The case involves four families but could have implications for dozens of other residents also facing eviction in the same neighborhood.

A representative and a lawyer for the Jewish settler group, Nahalat Shimon, each declined to comment, as did the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the prime minister's office. The Foreign Ministry [has previously described the case](#) as "a real-estate dispute between private parties" that the Palestinian leadership has exploited "to incite violence in Jerusalem."

The dispute in Sheikh Jarrah has its roots in the 19th century, when the city was governed by the Ottoman Empire. The parties disagree on the history of the neighborhood's ownership, but an Israeli court has found that in 1876, Arab landowners sold plots there to two Jewish trusts. Tradition held that the land housed the ancient tomb of a revered Jewish priest, Shimon Hatzadik.

Jordan captured the site during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, and later built dozens of houses there for Palestinian refugees who had fled their homes during the war.

After Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, the land was returned to the Jewish trusts, which then sold it to various settler groups. Those groups, in turn, have spent decades trying to evict the Palestinian refugees. Some Palestinian residents have already been forced to leave, while others — like the four families who rejected the deal on Tuesday — are still appealing their evictions.

The evictions have highlighted what critics say is an imbalance in who gets to reclaim land in Jerusalem. A 1970 law allows landowners to reclaim certain properties in East Jerusalem that were captured by Jordan in 1948. While the law does not refer to the beneficiaries' ethnicity, experts and officials say it overwhelmingly benefits Jewish owners.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Widespread coronavirus infection Iowa deer
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/science/deer-covid-infection.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Science
GIST	<p>A new study of hundreds of white-tailed deer infected with the coronavirus in Iowa has found that the animals probably are contracting the virus from humans, and then rapidly spreading it among one another, according to researchers.</p> <p>Up to 80 percent of deer sampled from April 2020 through January 2021 in the state were infected, the study indicated.</p> <p>Scientists said the findings pose worrisome implications for the spread of the coronavirus, although they were not able to identify how the deer might have contracted the virus from humans. There is no evidence that deer have passed the virus back to humans.</p>

Researchers and outside experts characterized the study's findings as a troubling development in the course of the pandemic. Widespread infection among North America's most ubiquitous game species could make eradicating the pathogen even more difficult, especially if they became a reservoir for mutations that eventually spilled back over to humans.

The study has not been published in a peer-reviewed science journal yet, but its authors at Penn State University and wildlife officials in Iowa found the results so disturbing that they are alerting deer hunters and others who handle deer to take precautions to avoid transmission.

Earlier this year, a [multistate survey](#) of white-tailed deer by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service turned up antibodies for the virus among less than half the deer in four states, but that study confirmed exposure, not infection. (Antibodies could mean the deer fought off infection.)

This new analysis — conducted by examining the lymph nodes of samples from roadkill and from those felled by hunters — showed active infections, the researchers said. The veterinary microbiologists who led the Penn State study, Suresh Kuchipudi and Vivek Kapur, said they were not prepared to find such widespread infection.

"It was effectively showing up in all parts of the state," said Dr. Kuchipudi. "We were dumbfounded." Evidence of transmission from people, the scientists said, was found in the genomic sequencing of the samples collected over months that reflected the virus lineages circulating among humans.

"There is no reason to believe that the same thing isn't happening in other states where deer are present," Dr. Kapur said.

Previous studies have hinted at such a possibility because a number of other animals are susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19 in humans. They include ferrets and primates that have been intentionally infected in lab experiments, zoo animals that caught the virus from their handlers and captive mink that were sickened after being exposed to the pathogen by farm workers.

In the case of mink, the coronavirus has already demonstrated an ability to sicken animals infected by humans, and last year, Denmark slaughtered its entire population of 17 million farmed mink after scientists discovered they could pass the virus back to people. The virus, they found, had also picked up mutations along the way, but officials said none were especially worrisome.

If the virus were to become endemic in wild animals like deer, it could evolve over time to become more virulent and then infect people with a new strain capable of evading the current crop of vaccines.

The findings were verified on Tuesday by federal scientists at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories, according to a spokesperson.

Scientists unaffiliated with the study who reviewed the findings said they were stunned, but not entirely surprised.

"If deer can transmit the virus to humans, it's a game changer," said Tony Goldberg, a veterinarian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies the evolution of infectious diseases as they jump between animals and people. "To have a wildlife species become a reservoir after transmission from humans is very rare and unlucky, as if we needed more bad luck."

The Penn State researchers have been working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which already conducts surveillance on chronic wasting disease, a fatal neurological illness among white-tailed deer. The first positive test results showed up in September 2020 — in two deer at different ends of the state. Between late November and early January, as the pandemic was surging in humans across Iowa, 80 percent of the deer specimens tested positive for the virus.

By then, the researchers had tested only 300 of the 5,000 lymph nodes available to them; but the evidence was overwhelming.

Such a high rate of infection, Dr. Kuchipudi said, was effectively 50 times greater than its prevalence among Iowa's human residents during the peak of the pandemic.

What they found as they probed deeper was even more astounding. Using tests to decode the genomic makeup of each viral sample, they found similar patterns between the emergence of mutations and variants in the state's deer population and those infecting people. Researchers said that offered stronger proof of human-to-deer transmission as well as evidence that deer were then spreading the virus to one another at a rapid clip. Mapping the location of each sample also suggested that the infections were occurring simultaneously across the state as hunting season ramped up. The study's authors say it is unclear whether the deer were sickened by the infection.

How the virus passes from people to deer, however, is not entirely clear. Rachel Ruden, Iowa's state wildlife veterinarian and an author of the study, said there were plenty of opportunities for transmission given that 445,000 deer roam the state.

The virus can spread when people feed deer in their backyard, through sewage discharges or maybe when an animal licks a splotch of chewing tobacco left behind by an infected hunter. "Perhaps it doesn't take much of a loading dose to get deer infected," she said. "But either way, all of this is a striking example that we're all in this pandemic together."

The study raises a multitude of questions that scientists will be keen to examine, including whether other wild animals can also carry the virus, particularly rodents like mice that live in even closer proximity to people. The more species capable of carrying the virus, the greater the chances it can evolve in ways that threaten human health.

Such a scenario is not at all far-fetched. Even if the exact origins of SARS-CoV-2 remain [a subject of debate](#), many scientists are inclined to believe the virus was a product of natural transmission from animals, most likely bats. There is no shortage of unpleasant pathogens that toggle between humans and animals, among them yellow fever, West Nile virus and strains of seasonal influenza that can infect birds and pigs.

Despite their concerns that the country's 38 million white-tailed deer could become a lasting reservoir for the coronavirus, experts say such a scenario does not mean all hope is lost in the battle to conquer the pandemic.

A dangerous mutation that one day finds its way from deer to people could be tackled with a booster shot — not unlike how vaccines for the seasonal flu are developed each year. A coronavirus vaccine for deer is also a possibility — scientists have already created them [for zoo animals](#) — but the practicality of inoculating millions of free-roaming ungulates would be daunting, to say the least.

In the meantime, several states have [advised deer hunters](#) to take precautions when dealing with white-tailed deer: wear rubber gloves and perhaps a mask when field dressing and processing; sanitize hands and instruments after dressing; and bag carcass remains before disposing in trash. Health officials say eating cooked venison carries little risk as long as it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F.

Barbara Han, a disease ecologist at the [Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies](#) who has been studying the [spillover capacity](#) of SARS-CoV-2 in various mammals, said the findings reinforced the need for a more robust system of surveillance that can quickly detect the transmission of pathogens from animals to people.

The pandemic has already prompted better coordination among laboratories across the United States, but she said she hoped the latest findings might turbocharge efforts to create a national, federally

	<p>funded surveillance network for so-called zoonotic diseases. Despite a global death toll that has surpassed five million, Dr. Han and other experts say Covid-19 could have been far deadlier, a possibility underscored by viruses like Ebola.</p> <p>“We can’t keep playing whack-a-mole with these zoonotic diseases because it’s just too costly, both financially and from a human losses standpoint,” she said. “We have got to do better.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 China tennis star ignites #MeToo firestorm
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/03/world/asia/china-metoo-peng-shuai-zhang-gaoli.html
GIST	<p>Peng Shuai, the professional tennis star, publicly accused a former vice premier of China of sexual assault, igniting an online firestorm of attention to a #MeToo allegation that for the first time touched the pinnacles of Communist Party power.</p> <p>Ms. Peng made the allegation in a post on Tuesday night on her verified account on Weibo, China’s version of Twitter. In it, she described an assault that began an on-and-off consensual relationship with Zhang Gaoli, who from 2013 to 2018 served on the party’s Politburo Standing Committee, the top ruling body in China.</p> <p>The post was removed within minutes, but the allegations swirled through the country’s heavily controlled internet, fueled by the fame of the accuser and the accused. That kept the censors inside China’s Great Firewall scrambling.</p> <p>Searches of her name and even the word “tennis” appeared to be blocked, reflecting the extraordinary sensitivity within China of discussing misconduct by party leaders.</p> <p>“The impact of #MeToo has been accumulating for three years,” Lü Pin, an activist who founded the now-banned Chinese online forum Feminist Voices, said in a telephone interview from New Jersey, where she now lives. “When the first women began talking about their experiences three years ago, no one could have imagined that it would reach this high level.”</p> <p>Ms. Peng’s accusations could not be corroborated. In her post, she acknowledged that she would be unable to produce evidence of her accusation, suggesting at one point that Mr. Zhang had expressed worries that she might record their encounters.</p> <p>She could not be reached for comment. The State Council, China’s governing body, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The authorities have charged government officials with sexual misconduct before, often in conjunction with corruption investigations. Never before, though, has an accusation of sexual misconduct been leveled publicly against as senior a political leader as Mr. Zhang.</p> <p>“These allegations are not shocking in substance but are shocking in the target,” Bill Bishop, the founder of Sinocism, a newsletter on Chinese affairs, wrote.</p> <p>An economist by education, Mr. Zhang, now 75, rose through the ranks of the party and government. He served as governor of Shandong, the coastal province, and then as party secretary in Tianjin, the provincial-level port city on the Bohai Sea. As vice premier from 2013 to 2018, he was one of seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, headed then, as now, by China’s leader, Xi Jinping.</p> <p>“I know that for someone of your eminence, Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, you’ve said that you’re not afraid,” Ms. Peng wrote in her post, “but even if it’s just me, like an egg hitting a rock, or a moth to the flame, courting self-destruction, I’ll tell the truth about you.”</p>

Women in [media](#), at [universities](#) and in the [private sector](#) in China have all come forward with accusations of sexual assault and harassment — only to face [pushback](#) in the courts and censorship online.

In China, many women say, there remains an [ingrained patriarchal tradition](#) of using positions in business or government to gain sexual favors from subordinates or other women. In 2016, the country's top prosecuting agency listed the exchange of "power for sex recklessly" as one of six traits of senior officials accused of corruption.

The accuser in another high-profile harassment case, Zhou Xiaoxuan, posted a note expressing sympathy for Ms. Peng, illustrating how widely the accusation became known despite the censorship. "I hope she's safe and sound," she wrote.

Ms. Zhou, who in 2018 accused a prominent television anchor of sexual harassment four years earlier, emerged as [a trailblazer](#) of China's fledgling #MeToo movement and also a victim of the social and legal challenges women who come forward face. In September, a court in Beijing [ruled](#) that she had "tendered insufficient evidence" to prove her case against the anchor, Zhu Jun, who has sued her for slander.

Mr. Zhang retired in 2018, when, according to Ms. Peng's account, the two resumed a relationship that had begun when he served in Tianjin, which would have been between 2007 and 2012. She said he had first assaulted her after inviting her to play tennis with him and his wife. "I never consented that afternoon, crying all the time," she wrote, not specifying when exactly the assault occurred.

At the time she was soaring through a professional career that would propel her to a No. 1 ranking in doubles with the Women's Tennis Association in 2014 and as high as 14th as a singles player.

With her partner, Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan, she won the doubles championship at Wimbledon in 2013 and again at the French Open in 2014. That year, playing singles, she [reached the semifinals of the U.S. Open](#). She remains ranked 189th in singles and 248th in doubles, last playing at the Qatar Total Open in February 2020, according to [the association](#).

She was one of the athletes who broke out of the country's sports system, which mandates that most train under state coaches and give most of their earnings, even from endorsements, back to the state. She was one of the first to reach an agreement to allow her to train and travel by herself and keep a larger share of the earnings.

Her post continued to circulate in screen shots and other messages even after it was deleted, a testament to the resonance accusations like hers has in Chinese society.

"The censorship is not working," Ms. Lü, the activist, said. She added that while it was important that people were discussing the issue, "changing policy is the most difficult part."

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HEADLINE	11/02 US-Russia engagement deepens
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/world/europe/united-states-russia-william-burns.html
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, met with a top adviser to President Vladimir V. Putin in Moscow on Tuesday, leading a delegation of American officials on a two-day visit to the Russian capital that served as the latest evidence of heightened engagement between two global adversaries.</p> <p>Mr. Burns was traveling at President Biden's request, the American Embassy in Moscow said in a statement. The surprise visit was something of a merger of Mr. Burns's current role as intelligence chief and his past jobs as a senior American diplomat and state department official. Karen Donfried, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs, joined Mr. Burns in his meeting with the adviser to Mr. Putin, Nikolai Patrushev.</p>

“They are meeting with members of the Russian government to discuss a range of issues in the bilateral relationship,” an embassy spokesman said of the American delegation’s visit, scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday.

It was at least the fourth trip to Moscow since July by a senior American official, a sharp uptick in contact that has come in the wake of the [summit meeting](#) between Mr. Biden and Mr. Putin in Geneva in June. Officials on both sides say the talks have so far yielded no breakthroughs and are aimed primarily at stabilizing the relationship between two nuclear-armed adversaries increasingly competing in cyberspace as well as geopolitics.

The talks include a serious conversation on arms control and another on cybersecurity. The United States, for example, has turned over the names and other details of a few hackers actively launching attacks on America from Russia, and is waiting to see if the information results in arrests, The New York Times has [reported](#).

The two sides are also discussing other matters of mutual interest, including North Korea, Afghanistan and climate policy.

American officials have also said that Moscow has been helpful in ongoing talks with Iran about its nuclear program. Mr. Burns was one of the diplomats who began the back channel talks with Tehran that ultimately led to the international agreement in 2015 to limit its nuclear program. Former President Donald J. Trump [withdrew the United States from the deal](#) in 2018.

“While the number of issues that we have reached agreement on is not great, we are on the right path,” Mr. Putin said last month, praising the White House as “interested in building ties.”

Mr. Burns’s visit — and the decision to immediately disclose it — underlined the efforts by both sides to telegraph that they were working to manage a volatile relationship.

Mr. Biden [has argued](#) that even as the United States and Russia compete on the world stage they should be able to cooperate “where it’s in our mutual interests.” But his stance has opened him up to criticism that he is too willing to engage with a country that is undermining American interests globally and repressing dissent at home.

After landing on Tuesday, Mr. Burns sat down with Mr. Patrushev, who is the secretary of the Kremlin’s Security Council and is widely seen as the most powerful figure among the intelligence officials in Mr. Putin’s inner circle. In a brief video of the start of the meeting posted online by Russian media, Mr. Patrushev tells Mr. Burns, seated across from him at a conference table: “I am glad to greet you in Moscow.”

The C.I.A. declined to comment.

Russian officials have publicly floated the possibility of a second meeting between Mr. Putin and Mr. Biden before the end of the year, although the White House has not confirmed that another summit is under consideration. American officials would likely want to see some further progress on the issues discussed in Geneva before agreeing to another meeting.

Asked on Tuesday about the possibility of another Putin-Biden meeting, the Kremlin’s spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said that there was “a mutual interest in holding such contacts.”

“The timetable will be determined,” Mr. Peskov said.

The White House has used Mr. Burns as something of a roving diplomat, sending him, for example, to Afghanistan [to talk with Taliban leaders](#) during the evacuation of the Kabul airport in August. He also met with [senior Israeli leaders in Israel](#) ahead of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s visit to Washington.

	<p>A former U.S. ambassador to Moscow who has twice been stationed as a diplomat in Russia, he is one of the Biden Administration's senior officials most experienced in Russian affairs.</p> <p>The range of intelligence issues between the United States and Russia includes Moscow's election interference, pushing of disinformation globally, and ransomware attacks by Russian criminal groups.</p> <p>It is not clear if Mr. Burns was going to raise the issue of the anomalous health incidents known as "Havana Syndrome," a growing number of episodes where C.I.A. officers and other officials have suffered traumatic brain injuries after experiencing strange pressure, heat or sounds.</p> <p>Some American officials say privately that they believe Russia is responsible for those health incidents.</p> <p>However, C.I.A. analysts and other American intelligence agencies have not yet drawn any formal conclusions about what has caused them. Russia has dismissed speculation that it could be responsible as "unhealthy fantasies."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 New efforts to curb methane emissions
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/02/world/cop26-glasgow-climate-summit#the-biden-administration-plans-to-announce-regulations-on-methane-today
GIST	<p>Nations around the world joined together Tuesday to promise to curb emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that spews from oil and natural gas operations, livestock production and landfills and can warm the atmosphere 80 times as fast as carbon dioxide in the short term.</p> <p>President Biden, calling the agreement a "game-changing commitment," also announced that for the first time, the Environmental Protection Agency intended to limit the methane coming from existing oil and gas rigs across the United States.</p> <p>The federal government previously had rules that aimed to prevent methane leaks from oil and gas wells built since 2015, but the Trump administration rescinded them. President Biden intends to restore and strengthen them, administration aides said.</p> <p>The announcement, at the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, came as Mr. Biden faces intense pressure internationally and at home to show that the United States, the nation that has historically pumped the most greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, is serious about mitigating climate change.</p> <p>Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said cutting methane emissions was "one of the most effective things we can do" to slow global warming.</p> <p>"We cannot wait for 2050 — we have to cut emissions fast," she said, calling methane "the lowest-hanging fruit."</p> <p>Mr. Biden has set an aggressive target of cutting the country's emissions this decade about 50 percent below 2005 levels, but legislation to help meet that goal is stalled in Congress. That leaves the administration relying on regulations and other executive actions.</p> <p>At the United Nations climate summit this week, Mr. Biden is trying to persuade other countries to reduce emissions from fossil fuels that are heating the planet to dangerous levels.</p> <p>The White House said that more than 90 countries had signed the Global Methane Pledge, a commitment to reducing methane emissions 30 percent by 2030, including half of the world's top 30 methane emitters. The United States, European Union, Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria are among those that have signed on. Some major polluters, like China, India and Russia, have not joined.</p>

	<p>Methane is the second most important greenhouse gas warming the planet, after carbon dioxide, which is produced when countries burn oil, coal and natural gas for energy. Methane is the main ingredient in natural gas, and when it leaks out of wells and pipelines and into the atmosphere before being burned, it creates methane emissions. Livestock and landfills also produce methane.</p> <p>The European Union announced the formation of the International Methane Emissions Observatory to ensure accountability. It will focus first on tracking the fossil fuel industry, which is responsible for one-third of anthropogenic emissions, and will then move on to other sectors like agriculture and waste.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 US rejoins coalition to achieve 1.5C goal
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/02/us-rejoins-coalition-to-achieve-15c-goal-at-un-climate-talks
GIST	<p>The US has rejoined the High Ambition Coalition at the UN climate talks, the group of developed and developing countries that ensured the 1.5C goal was a key plank of the Paris agreement.</p> <p>The decision by the world's biggest economy and second biggest emitter, after China, to return to the High Ambition Coalition group of countries marks a significant boost to attempts to focus the Cop26 summit on limiting temperature rises to 1.5C, the tougher of the two goals of the Paris agreement.</p> <p>The coalition, which numbered scores of countries at the 2015 Paris talks, will on Tuesday call on governments to step up their efforts on greenhouse gas emissions and phasing out coal, consistent with a 1.5C limit, and urge rich nations to double the amount of climate finance they make available for poor countries to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. They also want to bring an end to subsidies for fossil fuels.</p> <p>A senior US official said: "The High Ambition Coalition was instrumental in Paris in making sure that high ambition was written into the Paris agreement and will be instrumental in Glasgow in making sure it's delivered."</p> <p>Tina Stege, the climate envoy for the Marshall Islands, said: "The High Ambition Coalition has set the bar for what needs to happen at this Cop: getting on track to limiting temperature rise to 1.5C with enhanced [nationally determined contributions] and with real, actual actions, like phasing out coal; a sea-change on adaptation, with at least a doubling of current levels of adaptation financing; and making sure that we all have the resources we need to face this crisis, including the loss and damage we're already experiencing today.</p> <p>"These heads of state have given their marching orders for ambition."</p> <p>One negotiator said fears that the 1.5C target was in danger of slipping out of reach had prompted the group's resurgence. "We are extremely concerned about 1.5C," they said. "That's why we are calling for a way to keep 1.5C as a viable option."</p> <p>The High Ambition Coalition was formed in the run-up to Paris by the chief negotiator for the Marshall Islands, Tony de Brum. Though the tiny Pacific island state, made up of 29 atolls, has a population of only 60,000, the charismatic De Brum had a major influence at climate Cops.</p> <p>The goal of holding temperature rises to 1.5C rather than 2C is much harder to achieve, as it requires emissions cuts of at least 45% by 2030, compared with 2010 levels. But science shows it is much safer – beyond 1.5C, many of the impacts of climate breakdown, such as melting ice sheets, become irreversible, and many small islands would face inundation from rising sea levels and storm surges.</p> <p>De Brum spent months taking soundings from developed and developing countries, and in the closing days, when it appeared that the 1.5C could be in danger, the coalition was announced.</p>

	<p>John Kerry, the US climate envoy, said earlier this year that the Paris goal of “pursuing efforts” to 1.5C was “based on hard work by the High Ambition Coalition and the small island developing states. They felt it that it was imperative – and thank heavens they did. Science has now caught up to that fact, the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] and IEA [International Energy Agency] and others have been pretty clear, that this is what we need to try to achieve.”</p> <p>De Brum died in 2017. Stege is his niece.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Recall: Tesla vehicles
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/02/tesla-recall-nearly-12000-us-vehicles-software-glitch
GIST	<p>Tesla Inc is recalling nearly 12,000 US vehicles sold since 2017 because a communication error may cause a false forward-collision warning or unexpected activation of the emergency brakes, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The California automaker said the recall of 11,704 Model S, X, 3 and Y vehicles was prompted after a software update on 23 October to vehicles in its limited early access version 10.3 Full-Self Driving (FSD) (Beta) population.</p> <p>FSD is an advanced driver assistance system that handles some driving tasks but Tesla says does not make vehicles autonomous.</p> <p>NHTSA said Tesla “uninstalled FSD 10.3 after receiving reports of inadvertent activation of the automatic emergency braking system” and then “updated the software and released FSD version 10.3.1 to those vehicles affected”.</p> <p>The agency said it “will continue its conversations with Tesla to ensure that any safety defect is promptly acknowledged and addressed”.</p> <p>The recall comes after NHTSA last month asked Tesla why it had not issued a recall to address software updates made to its autopilot driver-assistance system to improve the vehicles’ ability to detect emergency vehicles.</p> <p>Tesla said the issue was prompted by a software communication disconnect between two onboard chips that prompted an issue that could produce “negative object velocity detections when other vehicles are present”.</p> <p>If the automatic emergency braking system unexpectedly activates while driving, it could raise the risk of a rear-end collision, Tesla said, but added it was not aware of any crashes or injuries related to the issue.</p> <p>After the 24 October reports, Tesla said canceled the FSD update on vehicles that had not installed it and disabled FCW and AEB on affected vehicles.</p> <p>The same day, the Tesla chief executive, Elon Musk, tweeted of FSD: “Seeing some issues with 10.3, so rolling back to 10.2 temporarily. Please note, this is to be expected with beta software.”</p> <p>On 25 October, Tesla began deploying the over-the-air software update and re-enabled FCW and AEB features on vehicles with the update.</p> <p>Tesla said as of 29 October, more than 99.8% of the vehicles – all but for 17 – had installed an update and no further action is necessary.</p> <p>NHTSA in August opened a formal safety probe into Tesla’s autopilot system in 765,000 US vehicles after a series of crashes involving Tesla models and emergency vehicles.</p>

	The US auto safety agency also asked Tesla in October about its “Autosteer on City Streets” which the company also refers to as FSD first leased in October 2020, and raised concerns about limits on disclosure by drivers of safety issues.
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HEADLINE	11/02 Police vaccine mandate: no crime backlash
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/02/police-vaccine-mandate-protest
GIST	<p>In Seattle, some police detectives stepped into patrol cars over the last month for the first time in more than a decade, according to Sgt Randy Huserik, who has been with the department for 28 years.</p> <p>The department has been short-staffed since 18 October, when the city began enforcing a mandate requiring officers to get vaccinated against Covid-19.</p> <p>But while the Seattle police union warned that the mandate would lead to “an alarming escalation in crime” and “an untenable public safety crisis”, Huserik said the department’s staffing strategy had allowed it to continue to properly respond to 911 calls.</p> <p>“We haven’t seen a significant need for detectives to be donning their uniforms and heading out and handling 911 calls,” Huserik said. “It’s only been a few [people] here and there.”</p> <p>Cities around the US have implemented similar mandates – and faced the same sort of backlash from police unions who have predicted chaos – but the warnings that the mandates would deplete police departments and make cities more dangerous have not yet proven true, according to policing and public health experts.</p> <p>Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, which advises police departments across the country, described the warnings from police unions as “bravado”.</p> <p>“This isn’t asking cops to work extra hours without getting compensated,” said Wexler. “This is about a public health emergency, and this isn’t about taking away rights. This is about protecting cops from dying” from Covid, which has killed almost 500 officers in the United States over the last two years, about five times the number who died from gunfire, according to the non-profit Officer Down Memorial Page.</p> <p>On Monday, New York began enforcing its vaccinate mandate for city employees, which meant about 9,000 people who refused to get the vaccine were placed on unpaid leave, representing about 6% of the city workforce, according to NPR.</p> <p>Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Monday that 91% of city employees had been vaccinated, the New York Times reported. That included the New York police department, the largest in the country, in which 85% of officers have been vaccinated, up from 70% just a couple of weeks ago. Other cities, including Seattle and Los Angeles, have seen the same increase in vaccinations before mandate deadlines, as workers decide they would rather get the shot than lose their jobs or be placed on unpaid leave.</p> <p>In Seattle, 92% of the police department is fully vaccinated, according to the city. Twenty-two employees are partially vaccinated, and 100 others have requested an exemption.</p> <p>To combat the staffing shortfall, Seattle’s mayor, Jenny Durkan, announced last week that the city would begin offering a \$25,000 hiring bonus to experienced officers or 911 dispatchers.</p> <p>“We are encouraged by the mayor’s support because we have been pursuing hiring incentives,” Huserik said.</p> <p>But Mike Solan, president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild, condemned Durkan’s announcement, telling Fox News that she had already betrayed police officers by implementing the vaccine mandate and not supporting them during protests after George Floyd was killed in 2020.</p>

	<p>Despite the fierce battles over vaccine mandates, public health experts say they are effective.</p> <p>“As the deadline for the mandate gets closer, even people who said initially they are not going to get the vaccine, they begin to move and do get vaccinated,” said Sandra C Quinn, a professor of family science at the University of Maryland School of Public Health who has studied the role of communication in vaccine acceptance.</p> <p>Adam Galinsky, a social psychologist and expert in leadership and ethics at Columbia University, said the last-minute decisions to get vaccinated could be attributed to people’s tendency to avoid actions they might later regret. With a mandate, the decision is somewhat taken out of their hands.</p> <p>“Mandates work – especially mandates around public health,” Galinsky said. “Even when people whine ... and say they are going to quit, most people don’t.”</p> <p>Despite the uptick due to the mandates, some public health experts worry about the long-term consequences of the requirements on healthcare and society, including potentially greater opposition to other vaccines, said Katrin Schmelz, a behavioral economist and psychologist at the University of Konstanz.</p> <p>“Vaccination mandates will increase vaccination rates and on the other side of the scale, it could increase hostility towards the government and aggression and affect compliance with other Covid measures,” said Schmelz, who lives in Germany, which does not mandate Covid vaccines. “It’s not just: we enforce [the mandate] and are on the safe side, and all the problems are solved.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 LA sheriff: will not enforce vaccine mandate
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/los-angeles-county-sheriff-enforce-vaccine-mandate-80936380
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES -- Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said Tuesday he won’t comply with a mandate requiring deputies be vaccinated against the coronavirus or face termination, claiming thousands could leave the department and that will lead to more crime.</p> <p>His defiance to the order that was approved last summer by the LA County Board of Supervisors brought a rebuke from Janice Hahn, one of the panel’s five members who unanimously backed the policy.</p> <p>“He is putting both his deputies and the public they come face-to-face with every day at unnecessary risk,” she said in a statement. “What we need from the sheriff right now is leadership, for once.”</p> <p>Villanueva, who faces a reelection challenge next year, has defied other health orders during the pandemic. Last month, he said he wouldn’t have his deputies enforce a mandate requiring vaccinated and unvaccinated people wear masks at indoor public settings.</p> <p>Vaccine mandates are rolling out nationwide for government employees and many cities are clashing with first responder unions over the requirements. About 9,000 New York City municipal workers — including 34 officers — were put on unpaid leave for refusing to comply with a COVID-19 vaccine mandate that took effect Monday.</p> <p>The Los Angeles Police Department last week reported 70% of its officers and civil employees were fully vaccinated. Under the city’s policy, LAPD employees who don’t want to get vaccinated have an option to get tested twice per week at their own expense.</p> <p>Los Angeles is the nation’s most populous county with about 10 million people and Villanueva’s agency is the largest sheriff’s department in the country, with about 10,000 sworn deputies and 5,800 civilian employees.</p>

All county employees were required to register their vaccination status and show proof of full inoculation or receive a medical or religious exemption by Oct. 1. About 52% of sheriff's department deputies and other employees are fully vaccinated, compared to 77% of all county employees.

More than 3,000 deputies and other department employees have yet to register their vaccination status with the county. Those who registered and reported their status as unvaccinated include more than 3,100 deputies and 1,000 civilians who could be subject to termination, Villanueva said.

For comparison, the sheriff said the 3,100 figure is nearly the size of the department's patrol operations.

"So imagine what would happen if every one of these was terminated," Villanueva said at a news conference. "What would the department look like?"

Villanueva also said he expects to see hundreds of additional deputies retire or leave the department early because of the mandate, though the county's chief executive's office on Tuesday said there has been no increase in attrition since the requirement was approved.

Villanueva has said he is vaccinated but believes others should make their own choice and not be forced to get shots.

The sheriff has the power to terminate employees and with him refusing to follow the policy it was unclear whether anyone in his department would lose their jobs.

Jesus Ruiz, a spokesman for the county, said like all department heads Villanueva "is responsible for ensuring that county policies are followed." In an email, Ruiz said he could not speculate what might happen now that Villanueva won't enforce the mandate.

Despite the Oct. 1 deadline, the county only now is sending notices to those who have failed to register and get vaccinated. Once employees receive the notice, they have 45 days to comply before facing a five-day suspension, Ruiz said, and 30 days after that before they face termination.

Supervisor Kathryn Barger called it "unfortunate" that Villanueva won't discuss a solution.

"I am committed to supporting and listening to our sheriff's rank and file to get to the bottom of what barriers and obstacles they are facing so we can reach a resolution," she said in a statement. "Ultimately, we all share a commitment to public safety."

Los Angeles International Airport Police Chief Cecil Rhambo, who is running against Villanueva, said the mandate should be followed.

"Vaccines save lives, and deputies are employed to be life-savers, we must have a sheriff who will lead the department by enforcing the vaccine mandate to ensure the safety of deputies, as well as all the people they interact with across L.A. County," he said in a statement.

COVID-19 is the most common cause of law enforcement duty-related deaths in 2020 and 2021, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Zillow halts home flipping: unpredictability
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/zillow-stop-home-flipping-amid-pricing-unpredictability-80934174
GIST	LOS ANGELES -- Zillow Group said Tuesday that it will stop buying and selling homes, citing the "unpredictability" of forecasting housing prices.

The Seattle-based real estate information company said winding down its Zillow Offers homebuying and selling unit will take several quarters and will result in about a 25% reduction in the company's workforce, which is now at about 5,300.

The announcement comes about two weeks after Zillow said it would pause buying homes through the end of 2021, citing a backlog in renovations and other operations due to labor and supply constraints. The idea was to temporarily stop buying homes and focus on selling those it had already purchased.

But the company decided since then to shutter its home-flipping business altogether. In a press release Tuesday announcing the company's third-quarter results, CEO Rich Barton pinned the reason for closing down Zillow Offers on how difficult home-prices forecasting has become.

"We've determined the unpredictability in forecasting home prices far exceeds what we anticipated and continuing to scale Zillow Offers would result in too much earnings and balance-sheet volatility," Barton said.

The company also disclosed it took a write-down of about \$340 million because it bought homes during the third quarter at prices that exceed Zillow's estimates for what those properties will fetch in the future.

Zillow Offers is among a group of so-called "iBuyers," which includes Redfin and Opendoor. These companies buy homes, typically from sellers who want to sell their home quickly, and then put the homes back on the market.

These companies have been competing with regular homebuyers as the housing market superheated over the past year amid a shortage of properties on the market. The home-flipping business has helped juice Zillow's revenue this year. For the nine months ended in September, Zillow Offers' revenue increased 88% to \$2.65 billion versus the same period of 2020.

Zillow said it expects to book an additional \$240 million to \$265 million in losses in the fourth quarter primarily on home transactions expected to close this quarter.

Shares in Zillow fell 10.2% Tuesday before the release of its earnings amid published reports about the company's plans to shutter the home-flipping business. The stock slumped another 12% in after-hours trading following its announcement.

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HEADLINE	11/02 UN: CAR guards wound 10 peacekeepers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/central-african-republic-guards-wound-10-peacekeepers-80927164
GIST	<p>BANGUI, Central African Republic -- Central African Republic's presidential guard opened fire on United Nations peacekeepers in the capital, wounding 10 of them, the U.N. mission said Tuesday. One person was struck and killed by a U.N. vehicle as it fled the scene.</p> <p>The U.N. mission known as MINUSCA condemned Monday's development, calling the shooting of the unarmed Egyptian peacekeepers near the presidential palace "deliberate and unjustifiable."</p> <p>Presidential spokesman Albert Mokpem Yaloke urged calm, saying it was "an incident that we are managing."</p> <p>"We deplore the death of this compatriot and we offer our most saddened condolences to the family," he said.</p> <p>Monday's incident took place after a MINUSCA civilian officer entered the security perimeters of the presidential residence, according to MINUSCA spokesman Vladimir Monteiro.</p>

	<p>“After an exchange with the forces, he decided to turn back,” Monteiro said.</p> <p>The development comes amid mounting security fears in the capital, Bangui, of another rebel attack. Back in January rebels tried to seize the capital but were repelled by security forces after intense fighting on the city’s outskirts.</p> <p>President Faustin Archange Touadera recently offered a unilateral cease-fire to rebels, though said that government forces could still act in self-defense. The unexpected gesture prompted speculation that the president was becoming more vulnerable to the armed groups who oppose him.</p> <p>Tensions are also rising between the government and the U.N., which has called on the country’s authorities to separate from the Wagner group that is responsible for the president's safety. The U.N. has also imposed an arms embargo.</p> <p>The U.N. mission, which now has more than 12,000 military and police personnel, deployed to the mineral-rich country in 2013 when predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power and forced then President Francois Bozize from office.</p> <p>Anti-Balaka militias later fought back, also targeting civilians in the streets. Untold thousands were killed, and most of the capital’s Muslims fled the capital in fear of their lives.</p> <p>The country saw a period of relative peace in late 2015 and 2016, but violence then intensified once again. A 2019 peace deal between the government and 14 rebel groups has neared collapse in the years since.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Bahrain urges citizens to leave Lebanon
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bahrain-urges-citizens-leave-lebanon-crisis-grows-80924758
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- The island kingdom of Bahrain on Tuesday urged all its citizens in Lebanon to leave immediately as a diplomatic crisis escalates between Gulf Arab states and cash-strapped Lebanon.</p> <p>Bahrain’s foreign ministry ordered all Bahrainis to leave Lebanon “due to the tense situation there, which requires caution,” days after the United Arab Emirates did the same. The ministry also warned its citizens not to travel to Lebanon “permanently ... in order to prevent exposure to any risks.”</p> <p>Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Kuwait have all withdrawn their ambassadors from Beirut over televised remarks critical of the war in Yemen made by Lebanon’s game show host-turned-information minister. The internationally recognized government of Yemen followed suit on Tuesday, with its foreign ministry lambasting the comments as “reprehensible” and a “deviation from the Arab position in support of the just Yemeni cause.” It said it would recall its ambassador for “consultations.”</p> <p>The comments by the minister, George Kordahi, ricocheted around the internet over the past week, infuriating the Gulf Arab region and triggering a series of punitive steps that further isolate Lebanon and threaten to split its new coalition government, now tasked with halting the country’s economic tailspin.</p> <p>A Saudi-led military coalition launched a devastating air campaign in Yemen in 2015, after Yemen's rebels swept into the capital, Sanaa, and has been battling the Iran-backed Shiite Houthis for control of the country since.</p> <p>Along with pulling out their envoys, the four wealthy sheikhdoms expelled Lebanon’s ambassadors from their countries. Saudi Arabia also banned all Lebanese imports, a major blow to the tiny country in desperate need of foreign currency.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Africa presses for more climate support
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/adapt-die-africa-presses-climate-support-80929087
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda -- African leaders and campaigners are pressing the international community to do more to help poorer and vulnerable nations adapt to climate change, seizing on evidence showing the continent to be the most endangered by the effects of global warming.</p> <p>The head of the African Union, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, said other parts of the world must contribute half of the \$25 billion the continent needs to run an adaptation program over the next five years. The balance will come from the African Development Bank.</p> <p>Tshisekedi spoke Tuesday before an Africa-focused summit at the U.N. climate conference in the Scottish city of Glasgow. He was one of several leaders who highlighted Africa's plight in the face of climate change despite being the populated continent least responsible for global emissions.</p> <p>Tshisekedi noted that the global effort on climate change “can’t be won unless it is won in Africa,” which is home to 1.3 billion people. Africa’s 54 nations contribute only about 3% of global emissions, a fact that surprises some ordinary Africans when they find out.</p> <p>“It is a starting point rather than a ceiling, and it will contribute to building trust and confidence,” Tshisekedi said of the \$12.5 billion Africa needs to raise for climate-adaptation projects.</p> <p>He said he hoped the money would be raised before the next annual climate conference, to be held in Africa.</p> <p>World leaders are already pledging toward adaptation efforts, and it remains to be seen how much will be raised for Africa when the two-week Glasgow conference ends.</p> <p>In the meantime, some African leaders and campaigners are applying pressure, noting that a previous pledge to raise \$100 billion for Africa was never honored.</p> <p>“We don’t need more facts. We need more finance,” African Development Bank President Akinwumi Adesina said.</p> <p>Patrick Verkooijen, chief executive of the Netherlands-based Global Center on Adaptation, said the situation for Africa is “adapt or die,” noting that the effects of climate change “are at Africa's doorsteps today.”</p> <p>Alok Sharma, a British official who is leading the climate conference known as COP26, spoke of Malagasy women in Madagascar facing “a bleak future” of being unable to farm because of challenges stemming from climate change.</p> <p>“The need is great, and the injustice is stark,” he said.</p> <p>Others who spoke Tuesday included U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who said adaptation efforts were “a priority” for Washington. International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva called for the removal of obstacles to the empowerment of women as part of broader efforts to strengthen Africa's resilience amid climate change.</p> <p>Eze Christiana, a Nigerian living in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, said she doesn't think it is important to gather and talk about climate change.</p> <p>"We just need to adapt to it and take it the way we see it," she said of global warming.</p> <p>According to a report last month from the World Meteorological Organization and other U.N. agencies, Africa's people remain “extremely vulnerable” as the continent warms more and at a faster rate than the global average.</p>

	<p>The International Rescue Committee said Tuesday that in Somalia and some other African countries where it operates, people face “the sharp end of the climate crisis,” including emergency conditions from the current levels of global warming.</p> <p>The international community must invest in climate resilience and famine prevention, the humanitarian group said in a statement.</p> <p>“We’re extremely worried about the impact of continuing drought and conflict on vulnerable populations throughout the horn of Africa, where a large proportion of the population relies heavily on crops to eat and sell for their livelihoods, Kurt Tjossem, the group’s vice president for East Africa, said in that statement.</p> <p>In Somalia, for example, 3.5 million people face hunger after a failed harvest, with farmers who depend on livestock seeing their animals die from thirst daily, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Bulgaria deploys troops to Turkey border
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bulgaria-sends-troops-border-halt-migrants-turkey-80929089
GIST	<p>SOFIA, Bulgaria -- Bulgaria is deploying 350 troops and 40 army vehicles along its southern border with Turkey to help border police deal with a growing migrant influx, the Defense Ministry said Tuesday.</p> <p>The troops will conduct joint patrols along the 259-kilometer (161-mile) border with Turkey. They also will repair the partly damaged barbed-wire fence that was erected five years ago to prevent migrants, mainly from Syria, from illegally crossing the border from Turkey into the European Union nation.</p> <p>This year has seen a threefold increase of the number of detained illegal migrants compared to the same period last year, according to Interior Ministry data.</p> <p>The Balkan country of 7 million is located on a major route for migrants from the Mideast and Afghanistan to Europe. Only a small number of them plan to stay in the EUs poorest member, using Bulgaria instead as a transit corridor on their way westward.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 IAEA: Iran inspections ‘flying dense clouds’
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iaea-chief-iran-inspections-flying-heavy-clouds-80929579
GIST	<p>GLASGOW, Scotland -- The head of the U.N. atomic watchdog has compared his agency's efforts to monitor Iran's nuclear program to flying through dense clouds, warning that the situation can't continue for much longer.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency has been unable to access surveillance footage of Iranian nuclear sites, or online enrichment monitors and electronic seals since February.</p> <p>Physical inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities have also been problematic even as Tehran has continued to develop new centrifuges and enrich uranium up to purity levels closer to what's required for an atomic weapon. Western nations fear Iran could be developing the skills and know-how to build an atomic bomb, though Tehran denies any such ambitions.</p> <p>“I would say we are flying in a heavily clouded sky,” IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi said of his agency's ability to perform its monitoring function in Iran. “So we are flying and we can continue in this way, but not for too long.”</p> <p>Grossi told The Associated Press that he hopes to return to Iran soon “and to have the proper high level talks, eye-to-eye” that would restore the agency's ability to know in real-time what the country is doing.</p>

	<p>"This is in their interest as much as it is in the international community's interest, because if they take seriously their intentions to continue with their nuclear program for civil purposes, they have to give the guarantees of what is going on there," he said on the sidelines of the U.N. climate summit in Glasgow.</p> <p>"One has to, at some point, come to grips with this situation," said Grossi. "Otherwise we are going to be in a very uncertain territory, and I hope that will not be the case."</p> <p>The IAEA was charged with monitoring a 2015 accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA, aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear activity in exchange for the lifting of crippling sanctions.</p> <p>The U.S. pulled out of the accord under former President Donald Trump and reimposed sanctions on Iran. European nations have tried to bring the United States back into the nuclear accord, but their efforts have been frustrated by the unwillingness of Tehran's new hardline government to resume formal talks that would include reopening parts of the 2015 deal.</p> <p>"Together with the change of government, we have seen increased levels of tight security around their facilities, and this has led on occasion to some difficult moments with our inspectors," said Grossi.</p> <p>"We are checking that very, very carefully. I would never put my inspectors in harm's way," he said, without elaborating.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Syria: Israel air raid near Damascus
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-reports-israel-air-raid-military-post-damascus-80937004
GIST	<p>BEIRUT -- Syria's military said Israel has carried out an air raid that hit a military post on the outskirts of the capital of Damascus early Wednesday, causing material damage.</p> <p>It was the second Israeli attack to target areas near the capital in four days. The earlier attack on Saturday activated Syrian defense when missiles were fired during the day toward suburbs of Damascus, wounding two soldiers.</p> <p>A Syrian military statement carried on state media said the aerial attack early Wednesday came from northern Israel and targeted a military post in the town of Zakia, in the western Damascus countryside. It offered no further details.</p> <p>Israel carries out raids on Syria mostly during nighttime. Wednesday's raid occurred shortly after midnight, Syria's military said.</p> <p>There has been an increase in reported Israel attacks in recent weeks.</p> <p>Israel has staged hundreds of strikes on Iran-linked military targets in Syria over the years but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations.</p> <p>Israel has acknowledged, however, that it is targeting bases of Iran-allied militias, such as the powerful Lebanese militant Hezbollah group. It is going after arms shipments believed to be bound for the group. Hezbollah is fighting on the side of Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces in the civil war.</p> <p>Israel says Iranian presence on its northern frontier is a red line, and it has repeatedly struck what it has described as Iran-linked facilities and weapons convoys destined for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Iraq election fraud claims fuel uncertainty
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraq-election-fraud-claims-fuel-uncertainty-divisions-80941969

BAGHDAD -- More than three weeks after Iraqis voted in parliament elections, pro-Iran Shiite militias that emerged as the biggest losers are still rejecting the outcome of the vote, thrusting the country into uncertainty and political crisis.

Militia supporters have pitched tents near the entrance to Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone in an ongoing sit-in, threatening violence unless their grievances are addressed.

The unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud are casting a shadow over an election that was praised by the United States, the U.N. Security Council and others for being the smoothest in years and without major technical glitches. The standoff is also increasing tensions among rival Shiite factions that could reflect on the street and threaten Iraq's newfound relative stability.

The Oct. 10 vote was held months ahead of schedule in response to mass protests in late 2019 that saw tens of thousands of people in Baghdad and predominantly Shiite southern provinces rally against endemic corruption, poor services and unemployment. They also protested against the heavy-handed interference of neighboring Iran in Iraq's affairs through Iran-backed militias.

The election results further exposed the dangerous political divisions among Shiite factions. Shiite Muslims make up the majority of Iraq's estimated 40 million people.

The biggest election gains were made by influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who won 73 out of 329 parliament seats. While he maintains good relations with Iran, al-Sadr publicly opposes external interference in Iraq's affairs. The Taqadum party led by Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, a Sunni, came second with 37 seats, while former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law bloc won 35 seats.

Meanwhile, the Iran-backed Fatah Alliance that represents the Shiite paramilitary group known as the Popular Mobilization Forces lost two-thirds of its parliament seats, dropping from 48 to around 16 — a stunning defeat. The alliance had made big gains after participating in elections for the first time in 2018. At the time, it was riding a wave of popularity after playing a major role, alongside Iraqi security forces and a U.S.-led coalition, in the defeat of Islamic State group extremists across the country in 2017.

But the mood changed. Many began questioning the need for the PMF, an armed militia force that increasingly challenged the state's authority. The force itself has splintered, with some factions aligned with top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani breaking away. The militias also lost some popularity in the past two years, alienating many after taking part in brutally suppressing the youth-led protest movement in late 2019 and early 2020.

"Iraq is entering a new phase in its political history that the PMF and its Iranian sponsors are ill-equipped to manage, one in which coercive power may not be sufficient," wrote Ranj Alaaldin, a nonresident fellow at Brookings Institution, "Together with Iran, the PMF is learning the hard way that power through the barrel of a gun is not sustainable."

Election results reflected not only the losses of Iran-allied parties. They showed that even politicians who distanced themselves from Tehran several years ago, such as former Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and cleric Ammar al-Hakim, fared poorly, said political analyst Tamer Badawi, an associate fellow with the Bonn-based CARPO research center.

"The street's backlash is multilayered and broadly against old guard parties' inability to provide benefits and good governance," said Badawi. He said many Iraqis also blame Iran for Iraq's dire situation.

It's unclear when the final election results will be announced. The higher election committee is currently looking into more than a thousand appeals, although results are not likely to change significantly.

Iraqi troops have been on alert since the election, as militia members and their supporters take to the street, denouncing the election as a fraud and raising the prospect of clashes. The demonstrators have chanted slogans against the U.S. and denounced U.N. officials, who monitored the election.

The protests appear to be aimed at pressuring al-Sadr to ensure that Iran-aligned factions are part of the next Cabinet, regardless of the number of seats they won. Since it got the largest number of seats, al-Sadr's bloc will seek coalition partners and name the prime minister.

"If they are outside of the government, they will lose financial resources and this will weaken them," a senior Shiite official said, adding that Fatah Alliance leaders were stunned by their electoral loss. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to divulge sensitive information.

Al-Sadr has kept quiet about plans for coalition negotiations, pending final results. But he has announced the closure of the offices of his Saraya al-Salam fighters in various provinces — a move apparently meant to show he is serious about bringing all arms under state control. He has also called for new dialogue about the ongoing American troop presence and condemned strikes against diplomatic missions that were believed to have been carried out by PMF groups.

Shiite factions will need to find some common ground to prevent a resurgence of IS, a Sunni group, Badawi said. Last week, suspected IS militants attacked a predominantly Shiite village in Diyala province, killing 11 civilians and spurring a revenge attack on a nearby Sunni village.

But analysts say the threats from Fatah-linked groups will likely persist until they reach a power-sharing deal with al-Sadr.

"A preliminary political agreement can be crucial in helping to prevent a deadly resurge in IS attacks," said Badawi.

Ihsan Alshamary, who heads the Iraqi Political Thinking Center in Baghdad, said the continued politicization of the Shiite militias will further distance them from the Shiite community.

"There is a split in the Shiite street between the armed factions and the Shiite street that did not vote for them," he added.

Threats from Fatah-linked paramilitary groups will likely persist until they reach a power-sharing deal with al-Sadr, Alshamary said.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Study: gun violence costs \$280B a year
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/bear-burden-gun-violence-costs-america-280-billion/story?id=80245349
GIST	<p>In the debate about gun violence, advocates on all sides cite many statistics.</p> <p>One that is prominently mentioned is the number of gun deaths, more than 194,000 over the past five years, averaging about 39,000 deaths annually, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>But the death toll - while gut-wrenching -- only tells part of the story.</p> <p>The true cost of gun violence is hard to quantify and its ripple effects extend through families and communities and over the course of generations in some cases.</p> <p>But there are ways to illustrate at least some of the scope of the issue.</p>

From hospital bills and lost wages to lost productivity, advocates estimate gun violence costs America almost \$300 billion a year, according to research by government groups and activists who have collected and reviewed available public data.

And the CDC estimates that over 4.5 million years of potential life were lost between 2015 and 2019. That amounts to an average of more than two decades of life lost for each gun victim, years that could have been spent helping raise families, contributing to society and countless other ways, researchers said.

Carolyn L. Yocom, director of the U.S. Government Accountability Office's health care team, told ABC News that gun violence costs in America haven't been thoroughly analyzed because they haven't been the top priority for policy makers who are looking for solutions to curb gun violence.

Yocom also noted that there has been little public or private funding to make such an annual cost analysis possible in the past.

Nonetheless, Yocom and other experts said public and non-profit groups have begun to crunch the numbers and demonstrate to the public just how detrimental gun violence is to their lives.

"When you think about the public health model and tracking problems, step one is measuring the impact," Yocom said.

Immediate financial costs

More than \$1 billion is spent every year on emergency room visits and ambulance services and other immediate hospital care linked to shootings, according to [a report released in June by the GAO](#), the first of its kind from the federal agency. The agency looked at data from hospitals in 2016 and 2017.

The GAO estimated that patients with Medicaid or other public health coverage accounted for over 60% of the costs annually during the two-year period, meaning the poorest Americans are bearing the brunt of gun violence.

Yocom, who authored the report, acknowledged that since this is one of the first studies that the federal government has done on the subject and it's going to take more time to determine if these costs have grown over the decades or will rise more in the future.

But the initial medical bill is still just a tiny fraction of the overall costs, other researchers found.

Yocom said even the survivors of gun violence can often face crippling care-related costs not covered by their private or public insurance coverage, such as rehabilitation, medications and other medical tests.

"While not receiving needed services may minimize costs initially, the consequences of unmet health needs for firearm injury survivors may ultimately result in greater costs," the report said.

Although the GAO report didn't go beyond initial hospital costs, other researchers have used public data to calculate what they say is a more complete picture of the overall costs.

Adding it all up

Earlier this year, the non-profit group Everytown for Gun Safety, which advocates for gun control policies, used data from several sources, including the federal Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project and the CDC, for [a more comprehensive study of what gun violence](#) costs the U.S -- \$280 billion every year, it estimates.

According to the group's report, short- and medium-term medical costs, including rehabilitation, follow-up appointments and mental health services, averaged about \$3.5 billion a year.

Everytown estimates that another \$214 billion is lost annually from quality-of-life costs -- jury awards, victim settlements -- and approximately \$51 billion is lost income. Businesses and organizations lose a

half-billion dollars in revenue annually because of employees who were killed by gun violence, according to the report

Everytown's analysis estimates that employers lose \$1.4 million in productivity, revenue, and costs required to recruit and train replacements for victims of gun violence every day.

Then there is the amount spent on law enforcement and court costs -- about \$10 billion annually, according to the Everytown report.

This is not to mention the psychological costs, the mental toll it takes on family, community members and witnesses to the violence.

"Not every household has a gun, not every community is affected by violence, but the costs affect them," said Sarah Burd-Sharps, director of research for Everytown. "We all bear a burden."

For comparison, the annual budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs is \$279 Billion and that of the Department of Housing and Urban Development is \$69 Billion, according to the respective agency's budget offices.

Years of life lost

Another way to calculate the cost of gun violence is in years of potential life lost [YPLL], or premature mortality, according to CDC calculations.

The formula assumes a person lives to be 65 and then calculates how many years on average are lost to premature death.

For gun violence deaths between 2015 and 2019, a total of 4,538,512 years of potential life were lost from 194,130 gun deaths, the CDC found. That is an average of 23.3 years lost for each gun death over the five years, the highest number for all causes of unnatural death, according to the agency.

The total number of years of potential life lost from all deaths not caused naturally or by disease was 21,797,198 for 1,195,943 incidents during those five years, the CDC data showed. That is an average of 18.2 potential years for each unnatural death, according to the agency.

The years of potential life lost for cancer deaths is about 15 and for auto accidents is about 22, CDC data shows.

Daniel Mosley, a clinical psychologist who's studied gun violence, told ABC News that YPLL estimates deserve additional emphasis in the discussion about the impacts of gun violence. Framing the effects in the scope of a person missing out on the prime years of their life, and the years they can most contribute to society, opens up more impactful discussions, he said.

However the cost of gun violence is calculated, the toll of violence reverberates throughout communities, Mosley added.

"That has an added measure of, 'Oh my' when you show it to people," Mosley said. "To me, the cost factor hits people at a different level about the impact on society as a whole. It can impact people's decision-making and be more engaged than when they were before."

Mosley said that while comparing shooting deaths to cancer deaths may seem a bit abstract, such research could lead to discussions on how to better prevent gun violence.

"For every person who is impacted," he said, "It's important to recognize that the layers of repercussions from an act, or acts, of gun violence spread out."

HEADLINE	11/02 Mass deforestation wiping out species
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/mass-deforestation-wiping-species-world/story?id=78564880
GIST	<p>The mass-clearing of trees will be the doom of many forms of life on this planet.</p> <p>Forests are critical to the Earth's ecology. They capture and store carbon out of the atmosphere. They can alter the air quality and quantity of drinking water. And they provide the most habitat for the world's terrestrial species.</p> <p>And yet, alarming rates of deforestation are continuing all over the globe, despite warnings from scientists and urgent calls from environmental activists to cease the clearing as much as possible.</p> <p>The planet is losing an estimated 137 species of plants, animals and insects every day due to deforestation, according to the World Animal Foundation.</p> <p>Here are four important species at risk of extinction, each in a region heavily affected by deforestation.</p> <p>Harpy eagle, the Amazon rainforest</p> <p>Populations of the harpy eagle, one of the largest eagle species in the world, are dwindling as tree canopies in the Amazon rainforest disappear, and along with it the habitat for the eagles' preferred prey, a new study published Wednesday in Nature Scientific Reports found.</p> <p>The eagles rely on specific prey that live in the canopy forests: two-toed sloths, brown capuchin monkeys and grey woolly monkeys, but as the food supply decreased, the eagles did not switch to alternative prey, the researchers found.</p> <p>The eagles would then deliver prey to their hatchlings less frequently, and when they did, the animals tended to have a smaller estimated weight in landscapes with 50% to 70% deforestation, according to the study.</p> <p>The researchers observed multiple eaglet deaths from starvation and did not locate any nests in areas with more than 70% deforestation.</p> <p>Brazil is home to 2.1 million square miles of rain forest -- more than 65% of all the rain forest in the world, according to the World Animal Foundation.</p> <p>But because of the Brazilian government's dedication to meat and leather trade, about 15% of the world's tropical forest cover was cleared between 1991 and 2004, according to the Foundation.</p> <p>The harpy eagle is at risk of disappearing in a similar fashion as 10 mammal, 20 bird and eight amphibian species during three decades of deforestation, according to the foundation. The species is listed as near threatened, with a decreasing population, on the International Union of Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.</p> <p>Apex predators are threatened around the world, and their extinctions are often driven by failure to acquire prey due to "severe prey scarcity," according to researchers.</p> <p>Sumatran orangutan, Southeast Asia</p> <p>The palm oil industry, 85% of which is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia, has wiped out a critical amount of trees in Southeast Asia -- and with it, many endangered species.</p> <p>Less than 80,000 orangutans are left in the world, and all of them live in Indonesia and Malaysia. Their habitats are under "constant threat" of deforestation, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Up to 3,000 are killed every year, according to the Orangutan Conservancy.</p>

The trees are cleared by illegal logging and for conversion from rain forests to palm oil plantations. About 80% of the orangutan's habitat was cleared in the 1990s and early 2000s by degradation, fragmentation and clearing -- and sometimes by intentionally set fires, the magazine [Scientific American reported](#).

Orangutans are agile climbers and "supremely adapted to life in trees," and it's rare for adult orangutans to ever touch the ground, according to Scientific American.

The orangutans are then forced to new areas in search for food, often bringing them in contact with humans, which leads to them being killed as "pests," according to the [Orangutan Conservancy](#).

Poachers are also targeting orangutans for the bush meat trade, ironically often by loggers who are clearing the forest, since the logging companies do not provide food for the workers, according to the magazine. The Sumatran orangutan is listed as critically endangered on the IUCN's [Red List](#).

Koala, Australia

Koalas have been on the decline due to deforestation even before the 2019 Australian bushfires wiped out an estimated [5,000 of the marsupials](#).

Between 2012 and 2016, at least 5,183 koalas were killed due to the bulldozing of trees, the [World Wildlife Fund Australia](#) found.

The koalas live in eucalyptus trees in forests and woodland, using them as both food and shelter. The habitats are left fragmented or completely destroyed as a result of the clearing, and they are forced to the ground to seek alternative shelter. They are often hit by cars, attacked by dogs or contract diseases, according to WWF Australia.

"If you lose your home and your food source then you are doomed," Deborah Tabart, chairman of the Australian Koala Foundation, told ABC News over email.

Protecting the habitat is the "only way" to save the species, Tabart said. The Australian Koala Foundation has proposed the [Koala Protection Act](#), which would focus on protecting trees, including habitats that are empty. While current federal legislation focuses on protecting the koala species itself, its habitat "is almost impossible to protect," according to the foundation.

The organization is also calling for a moratorium on logging of native forests, protection of all koala habitat and better management of plantation forests adjacent to koala habitats.

The species is listed as vulnerable with a decreasing population on the IUCN's [Red List](#). At the current rate, koalas could become extinct by 2050, according to WWF Australia.

Jaguar, The Americas

Populations of the largest species of cat in the Western Hemisphere are continuing to decrease due to loss of habitat.

While jaguars tend to live in habitat with dense tree canopy cover, such as the Amazon rainforest in Brazil or the Maya Forest in Central America, their range historically came as far north as New Mexico and Arizona, according to the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

The big cats require expansive areas of land for survival, but their current range is now just 51% of its historic range, according to the [IUCN](#).

Accelerated deforestation continue to threaten the jaguar habitat, especially when it occurs in corridors that connect conservation areas, according to a 2016 study published in the scientific journal [Biological Conservation](#). Without the corridors to travel through, the populations can become isolated and lose genetic diversity, which could then affect the short and long-term survival of the species.

In Gran Chaco, South America's largest tropical dry forest located in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia, about a third of critical jaguar habitat has been lost since the mid-1980s due to deforestation driven by agricultural expansion, a study published in [Biodiversity Research](#) in 2019 found.

There is a possibility that jaguars could reestablish a population in the United States through Mexico, which is the current northern edge of the range, Dan Thornton, assistant professor in the Washington State University School of the Environment and one of the authors of the study, told [Washington State Magazine](#).

Jaguars are listed a near threatened with a decreasing population on the IUCN's Red List. They are so elusive, that it is difficult to estimate how many are left in the wild, according to the [World Wildlife Fund](#).

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/01 Children's screen time doubles in pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.studyfinds.org/childrens-screen-time-doubled/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — Children's screen time has doubled during the pandemic — and it hasn't gone down since, according to new research. Researchers from the University of California-San Francisco say youngsters are spending almost <i>eight hours</i> a day looking at smartphones, tablets, and televisions, compared to less than four hours before COVID.</p> <p>Concerningly, this figure does not include the time spent on computers for school work. Researchers focused completely on recreational activities like playing video games, chatting on social media, texting, surfing the internet, and watching or streaming movies and TV shows. Along with contributing to a more sedentary lifestyle, study authors say this shift is also affecting the mental health of many adolescents.</p> <p>"As screen time increased, so did adolescents' worry and stress, while their coping abilities declined," says corresponding author Dr. Jason Nagata in a university release. "Though social media and video chat can foster social connection and support, we found that most of the adolescents' screen use during the pandemic didn't serve this purpose."</p> <p>Lockdowns, online learning, and social distancing has led to a reliance on digital media for nearly all facets of adolescents' lives over the last two years.</p> <p>The study, published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, is the first to show an increase using data from across the United States. The findings come from surveys of 5,412 participants between the ages of 10 and 14 who self-reported their screen time both before and during the pandemic.</p> <p>Is more screen time bad for your diet too?</p> <p>Results show adolescents are, on average, looking at screens for recreation for 7.7 hours a day. This is higher than pre-pandemic estimates of 3.8 hours from the same group of children. Most of this activity centers around watching or streaming videos, movies, or television shows. Playing multi or single-player video games also contributed to the increase.</p> <p>Study authors say poorer mental health and greater perceived stress show a link to higher total screen usage. More social support and coping behaviors showed a connection with lower total screen use. Despite the gradual reversal of quarantine restrictions, studies suggest screen time continues to remain high. This can be harmful, not just for mental health, but physical health as well.</p> <p>"Screen time lends itself to more sedentary time and less physical activity, snacking while distracted, eating in the absence of hunger, and greater exposure to food advertising," Dr. Nagata explains.</p> <p>Is this issue affecting minorities more?</p>

	<p>“We generally found higher screen time in Black and Latino/a adolescents and in those from lower-income households,” Nagata concludes. “This may be due to structural and systemic factors, such as lack of financial resources to do other kinds of activities or lack of access to safe outdoor spaces.”</p> <p>The rise in children’s screen time during the pandemic has triggered calls for greater interactivity and outdoor exercise. Previous studies have also linked smartphone and computer use to rising rates of eye health issues and nearsightedness among school children.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 ‘Destructive’ attack Pakistan national bank
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/destructive-cyberattack-hits-national-bank-of-pakistan/
GIST	<p>The National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) has suffered what two sources have described to <i>The Record</i> as a “destructive” cyberattack.</p> <p>The incident, which took place on the night between Friday and Saturday, impacted the bank’s backend systems and affected servers used to interlink the bank’s branches, the backend infrastructure controlling the bank’s ATM network, and the bank’s mobile apps.</p> <p>While the attack crippled some of these systems, no funds were reported missing, according to the bank and people familiar with the attack and the current investigation.</p> <p>“Immediate steps were taken to isolate the affected systems,” the bank said in a statement on Saturday.</p> <p>ATMs and some branches restored by Monday</p> <p>Recovery efforts were in full swing over the weekend, and by Monday, NBP reported that more than 1,000 branches opened and catered to customers as normal and that all ATMs nationwide had been fully restored.</p> <p>But despite the clear communication from NBP officials, news of the hack did not stop some scared customers from rushing ATMs to withdraw funds Monday morning.</p> <p>Together with some inaccurate reporting in local news outlets that up to nine different banks were hacked, the Pakistani government had to step in and issue a statement in order to calm spirits and prevent a run on all Pakistani banks on Monday.</p> <p><i>Some fake news regarding cybersecurity attack on banks is in circulation including remarks attributed to Chief Spokesman, Mr. Abid Qamar. According to these fake news, 9 banks have been affected by the attack and that money has been withdrawn and data stolen. SBP rejects these news. No bank, other than NBP, has faced a cyberattack. Further, no financial loss or data breach has been observed so far. SBP is monitoring the situation closely and it will share any update or information about the incident through its official channels.</i></p> <p>State Bank of Pakistan</p> <p>The incident is currently not being investigated as a ransomware attack but rather as a sabotage attempt, according to people familiar with the investigation.</p> <p>Pakistani security researcher Rafay Baloch shared a screenshot on Twitter earlier today claiming to portray one of the affected NBP systems. The screenshot showed a Windows computer failing to start due to a missing boot configuration file error.</p> <p><i>The Record</i> was able to verify the validity of Baloch’s claim that the screenshot came from NBP’s network.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Bandwidth.com fallout from DDoS extortion
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SOURCE	https://therecord.media/bandwidth-com-expects-to-lose-up-to-12m-following-ddos-extortion-attempt/
GIST	<p>Bandwidth Inc. expects to lose between \$9 million and \$12 million because of service downtime caused by a series of DDoS attacks the company dealt with during late September and early October this year.</p> <p>The attacks, which the company said it had fully mitigated since October 5, were part of a DDoS extortion campaign that targeted several VoIP providers across the globe.</p> <p>The attackers tried to obtain money from Bandwidth Inc. by attacking its Bandwidth.com portal, through which the company provided on-demand server infrastructure to smaller VoIP telephony providers.</p> <p>In a document filed with the US Securities Exchange Commission last week, Bandwidth said the attacks were large enough to put a dent in its Q3 revenue of \$0.7 million, along with bigger losses expected by the end of the year.</p> <p>“Based on preliminary usage data and currently known information, the company estimates that the impact of the DDoS attack may reduce CPaaS revenue for the full year of 2021 by an amount between \$9 million and \$12 million, inclusive of the aforementioned \$0.7 million revenue impact in the third quarter,” Bandwidth said.</p> <p>The company plans to discuss the attack and its impact on revenue in an earnings call on November 8, next week.</p> <p>The SEC documents filed last week offer a rare glimpse into the aftermath of DDoS attacks, many of which are often ridiculed as being the work of non-sophisticated threat actors. However, when attacks are timed and coordinated for maximum impact, Bandwidth’s filing shows that they can have a severe impact on a company’s bottom line, especially when attackers target cloud providers that either charge by the hour or need to maintain a nearly perfect uptime otherwise they incur penalties based on ongoing contracts.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 NASA: instruments in Hubble ‘safe mode’
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/11/hubbles-science-on-hold-as-instruments-switch-into-safe-mode/
GIST	<p>On Monday, NASA announced that the Hubble Space Telescope's science instruments were in an extended shutdown after problems appeared in late October. The issues arose as failed internal communications caused the science instruments to switch into safe mode twice over a two-day period. Everything outside the instruments is behaving normally, so the telescope is not at risk.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Hubble spent an extended period in safe mode due to problems with the power supply that feeds the main payload computer. Because the power supply affected a variety of hardware, the issues were difficult to diagnose.</p> <p>In this case, the issues appear to be simpler, at least superficially. The instrument package on the Hubble uses an internal synchronization signal to ensure that everything registers at the same time, allowing instruments to respond to commands in the proper order. On October 23, one of these synchronization signals failed to register, causing all the scientific instruments to enter safe mode. A simple reset of the instruments got everything working again.</p> <p>But on October 25, the scientific instruments registered the loss of multiple synchronization signals, and all of them re-entered safe mode. Given the repeat and apparent escalating nature of the problem, NASA has left the instruments in that state since.</p> <p>NASA says its engineers are assessing the behavior of the instruments and looking over Hubble's hardware setup to figure out what could be causing the problem. That information is being used to devise test procedures that will allow NASA to narrow down the culprits and come up with a repair procedure.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/01 Ransomware adds information campaigns?
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/as-demod-with-nra-information-operations-may-be-new-way-to-give-ransomware-victims-grief
GIST	<p>After the notorious Grief ransomware group added the National Rifle Association to its public list of victims, messages of the breach was reportedly amplified by a network of fake Twitter accounts. While it's still unclear if the network is connected to Grief, experts worry it could mark the beginning of information campaigns being added to the ransomware arsenal.</p> <p>Ransomware actors often use a collection of stressors to squeeze every dime of profit out of their work. Beyond encrypting files, actors encourage victims to pay ransoms by threatening to leak files and launching simultaneous DDoS attacks. Last week, the Conti group started selling victim data rather than merely posting it, to monetize even the breaches where ransoms were not paid. And it isn't out of the ordinary for ransomware groups to try to embarrass companies into paying by contacting the media or a victim's clients.</p> <p>"The amount of money they're making off of these negotiations and settlements is astounding," said Tom Richards, co-founder and chief strategy officer of Groupsense, a security firm with a prominent ransom negotiation practice. "So why wouldn't they, as entrepreneurs, invest a few thousands more for an amplification campaign, which is going to probably get picked up by the media, but also spread faster than the media stories might do to motivate their victim into paying?" News of the fake Twitter accounts was by the Daily Beast.</p> <p>Information operations, which is a tactic often referenced in the military that includes the dissemination of propaganda in pursuit of a competitive advantage, would offer a new mechanism for that embarrassment — something Richards said can be effective. He has seen third-party attention force victims to scramble to make deals just to get it to stop.</p> <p>There may be reasons that this kind of approach would not be broadly used. Attention and labor are limited resources that ransomware actors need to ration out.</p> <p>"I'm not sure how often they can use this sort of strategy; for every client definitely," said Maria Gershuni, global intelligence analyst at Flashpoint. "I think this might be for something high profile. Creating and maintaining networks does seem rather labor intensive."</p> <p>A lot goes into making fake Twitter accounts seem lifelike. The better the grift, the more time it takes. The Daily Beast reported that many of the accounts were not created with much realism in mind. Many still had the default image as profile picture or had no followers outside the network. No one has attributed the Twitter accounts to any nation or group, though some had tweeted about prior Grief announcements in the past. The accounts have since been taken down.</p> <p>The NRA case adds an additional wrinkle: There may be sanction implications dealing with the group Grief. Grief is an offshoot of the DoppelPaymer ransomware group that evolved from EvilCorp, said Gershuni. EvilCorp is sanctioned for connections with the Russian government, including for ransom payments.</p> <p>"The fact that the NRA's ransomware event is being amplified, I think, will motivate the NRA, and that is very likely the intent for the grief group. But I don't know whether or not grief realizes it might actually complicate things for the NRA significantly," said Richards.</p> <p>Grief's connection to EvilCorp has created a lot of speculation about what the NRA will do. Not paying the ransom could mean the leak of the organization's most tightly held secrets. Paying the ransom would violate sanctions, and it would be readily apparent if Grief's did not leak the files.</p> <p>If the NRA did pay, they would be counting on Grief not to indefinitely extort them for violating sanctions. Richards said that might be a good bet. Ransomware is a reputation-based business, and actors</p>

	<p>might have more to lose in the long run by crossing the NRA. For entrenched groups, moving on might be in their best interest.</p> <p>"Ransomware groups are kind of like chain restaurants. They're all about turnover. You sit down, they've got it mastered. You know that you're getting your drink in 42 seconds and you're being asked if you'd like it after one bite. Ransomware groups, too — All about turnover and just cashing in," said Richards.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 CISA: malware potential emergency comms
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/malware/cisa-warns-15-states-that-malware-could-be-injected-into-their-emergency-comms
GIST	<p>As state and local law enforcement agencies and public safety organizations continue to implement FirstNet, a dedicated nationwide wireless broadband network for first responders, federal agencies like the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are warning about the possibility of malware being injected into the information sharing process.</p> <p>While testifying at a House Homeland Security Committee meeting on emergency communications, Billy Bob Brown Jr., executive assistant director for emergency communications at CISA, told legislators that in the fast-moving aftermath of an emergency a vast disparate network of public and private actors must quickly share information, including documents, images or texts.</p> <p>CISA, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, public safety organizations and non-profits as well as contractors like AT&T (who manages FirstNet) must all contend with the possibility: that a bad actor could exploit the frenzied rush to share information in the midst of an emergency or natural disaster to inject malicious software into the broader emergency communications ecosystem.</p> <p>"If malware is introduced from the beginning in an image, in a video, in a text to a 911 center, it has the possibility and potential of providing that malware to those interconnected government systems," Brown told legislators.</p> <p>Brown said the agency has already engaged more than a dozen states to discuss the issue, as well as how broader threat like ransomware could be used to disrupt emergency communications services.</p> <p>"Here at CISA we've been discussing this issue ... beginning a process of sharing the concerns of cybersecurity public safety answering points across the nation," said Brown. "We have had several discussions with more than 15 states about challenges presented by cybersecurity, including ransomware, as we prepare for the next gen 911 introduction."</p> <p>Still, even as leaders have touted how closely they are coordinating on cybersecurity, concerns about potential vulnerabilities and the ability of bad actors to disrupt the nation's emergency communications persist, both in Congress and federal watchdogs.</p> <p>In August, an inspector general audit found that the Department of Commerce's oversight of the National Public Safety Broadband Network — which includes FirstNet — "continues to be a challenge," despite widespread recognition that the network is a frequent target of malicious hackers.</p> <p>"The FirstNet security scorecard has seen only marginal improvement since a year ago," auditors noted. "The Department must provide adequate oversight to ensure the safety, security, and resiliency of the network through effective cybersecurity."</p> <p>More than 18,500 agencies and 2.8 million public safety connections are using FirstNet across the country, according to Edward Parkinson, CEO of the First Responder Network Authority at NTIA. Those connections are overseen in part by network and security operations centers that operate around the clock.</p>

	<p>Parkinson claimed FirstNet was unique as one of the only networks in the country that is new enough to have been developed with cybersecurity in mind. However, the upcoming transition to 5G telecommunications infrastructure will likely present some fresh security challenges.</p> <p>“When you look at the end user, we’re going to really have to be very cognizant of this in a 5G ecosystem as the network gets pushed to the edge and as device security becomes another important part of that,” said Parkinson.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 FTC updates Safeguards Rule
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ftc-updates-safeguards-rule/
GIST	<p>The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has tightened the security standards that financial institutions must comply with when handling consumer data.</p> <p>Financial institutions will be required to explain their information-sharing practices and designate a single qualified individual to oversee their information security program.</p> <p>The change is part of an update to the FTC’s Safeguards Rule that was announced in a joint statement by FTC Chair Lina M. Khan and Commissioner Rebecca Kelly Slaughter.</p> <p>Five main modifications to the existing Standards for Safeguarding Customer Information were contained in a Final Rule issued by the commission.</p> <p>The first adds provisions designed to provide covered financial institutions with more guidance on developing and implementing specific aspects of an overall information security program. It specifies safeguards, including access controls and encryption, and adds mechanisms designed to ensure that employee training and oversight are effective.</p> <p>It states that “while the current Rule requires financial institutions to undertake a risk assessment and develop and implement safeguards to address the identified risks, the Final Rule sets forth specific criteria for what the risk assessment must include and requires that the risk assessment be set forth in writing.</p> <p>“As to particular safeguards, the Final Rule requires that they address access controls, data inventory and classification, encryption, secure development practices, authentication, information disposal procedures, change management, testing, and incident response.”</p> <p>The second modification is designed to improve the accountability of financial institutions’ information security programs, while the third exempts financial institutions that collect less customer information from certain requirements.</p> <p>Under the fourth, the definition of “financial institution” has been expanded to include entities engaged in activities that the Federal Reserve Board determines to be incidental to financial activities. It also adds “finders” – companies that bring together buyers and sellers of a product or service – within the scope of the Rule.</p> <p>The fifth change included in the Final Rule defines several terms and provides related examples.</p> <p>Khan and Slaughter said the new consumer protection measure was inspired by recent widespread data breaches, including the Equifax data breach in 2017, which exposed the information of 147 million Americans.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Annual cost child identity fraud nears \$1B
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/annual-cost-child-identity-fraud/

GIST	<p>New research published today by Javelin Strategy & Research puts the annual cost of child identity theft and fraud in the United States at nearly \$1bn.</p> <p>The 2021 Child Identity Fraud study authored by Tracy Kitten, director of fraud & security at Javelin Strategy & Research, analyzed factors that put children at the highest risk of identity theft and fraud.</p> <p>Risk factors examined for the research included behaviors, characteristics, and social media platforms.</p> <p>The study found that children who use Twitch (31%), Twitter (30%), and Facebook (25%) were most likely to have their personal information exposed in a data breach.</p> <p>Another key finding was that more than 1.25 million children in the United States became victims of identity theft and fraud in the past year. Resolving the situation cost the average family more than \$1,100 and was a slow process.</p> <p>Chillingly, the report revealed that over half of all child identity theft and fraud cases involve children ages 9 and younger, and that most (70%) victims know their perpetrators.</p> <p>“One of the most eye-opening findings from our research was just how much risk children are exposed to when they are not supervised online,” said Kitten.</p> <p>"Add to that nearly 90% of the households with internet access say they have children on social media, and the picture our findings paint quickly becomes dark, grim, and scary," said Kitten.</p> <p>Journalist and cybersecurity subject expert Kitten said criminals used social media to access vulnerable children.</p> <p>“Predators and cybercriminals lurk in the wings of all social media platforms, waiting for the moment to prey on overly trusting minors who may not fully understand safe online behavior.”</p> <p>Javelin advised families to limit and monitor the use of social media and messaging platforms by minors and to be on the lookout for cyber-bullying.</p> <p>"Platforms that allow users to direct/private message (DM), friend, or follow other users via public search pose the greatest concern," said a company spokesperson.</p> <p>Parents were urged not to share their children's information on social media and to set positive online safety examples to their children by practicing such behaviors themselves.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 BlackMatter shuts down; police pressure?
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/blackmatter-ransomware-claims-to-be-shutting-down-due-to-police-pressure/
GIST	<p>The BlackMatter ransomware is allegedly shutting down its operation due to pressure from the authorities and recent law enforcement operations.</p> <p>BlackMatter operates a private ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) website that affiliates can use to communicate with the core operators, open support tickets, and receive new ransomware builds.</p> <p>Today, security research group VX-Underground was sent a screenshot of a message allegedly posted by the BlackMatter operators on November 1st on the RaaS website. This post warns affiliates that the ransomware operation was shutting down in 48 hours.</p> <p>BlackMatter announcing their shut down in affiliate site</p> <p>This post roughly translates to English as the following:</p>

"Due to certain unsolvable circumstances associated with pressure from the authorities (part of the team is no longer available, after the latest news) - project is closed.

After 48 hours the entire infrastructure will be turned off, allowing:

** Issue mail to companies for further communication*

** Get decryptor. For this write "give a decryptor" inside the company chat, where necessary.*

We wish you all success, we were glad to work."

It is unclear what "latest news" is referring to, but the missing team members could be related to a recent international [law enforcement operation arresting twelve individuals](#) linked to 1,800 ransomware attacks in 71 countries.

In July, the REvil public-facing representative known as 'Unknown' also went missing, leading to the [shutting down of REvil](#).

If this post is legitimate and BlackMatter is shutting down its operation, it does not mean that the threat actors will no longer extort existing victims.

Based on the post, the RaaS site will allow affiliates to receive decryptors for existing victims so that they can continue extorting victims on their own.

BleepingComputer has not confirmed the validity of the post, but VX-Underground told BleepingComputer that a BlackMatter affiliate sent them the image.

Whether BlackMatter is shutting down remains to be seen, as it has been more than 48 hours since the warning was issued to affiliates, and the group's Tor payment site and data leak remain operational.

Likely to rebrand as a new ransomware

However, even if BlackMatter shuts down its operation, we will likely see them return as a different group in the future.

When ransomware gangs feel pressure from law enforcement or target a highly sensitive organization, it is common that they shut down their operation and relaunch under a new name.

BlackMatter is already a [rebrand of the DarkSide operation](#), which shut down after [attacking the Colonial Pipeline](#) and feeling the [full pressure of international law enforcement](#).

Other ransomware operations that have rebranded in the past include:

- [REvil to GandCrab](#)
- [Maze to Egregor](#)
- [Bitpaymer to DoppelPaymer](#) to [Grief](#)
- [Nemty to Nefilim to Karma](#)

It is only a matter of time until the operators of BlackMatter relaunch under a different name.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Attackers threaten supply chain structure
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/attackers-flaunt-remote-access-credentials-threaten-supply-chain
GIST	<p>Network access brokers, the cybercriminals who trade in credentials needed to compromise corporate computers, have advertised and sold credentials for a variety of global shipping and logistics companies in the past few months, threatening the already-overburdened supply chain infrastructure.</p> <p>Threat intelligence firm Intel 471 reports that targeted organizations include a Japanese container shipping firm, trucking and transportation companies in the United States, and a logistics firm in the United</p>

Kingdom. The attackers purportedly used vulnerabilities in, or insecure configurations of, remote access infrastructure such as Citrix, Cisco, Fortinet, and PulseSecure virtual private network technology, as well as Microsoft's remote desktop protocol (RDP) software.

While the advertised credentials may not presage an attack, the fact that they are advertised in cybercriminal forums does not bode well for the companies, says Greg Otto, a security researcher with Intel 471.

"We have seen attacks go from compromise or sale of credentials on the underground to a ransomware attack," he says. "Not every credential sale results in an attack, but it's never a good sign if your company is suddenly included in a cybercrime underground advertisement."

The global supply chain is suffering from shortages as consumer demand has skyrocketed following the coronavirus pandemic. In October, the port of Los Angeles — the gateway to manufacturers in the Asia-Pacific region — [moved to 24-hour operations](#) to try and reduce the backlog.

Ransomware has disrupted shipping operations in the past. In 2017, the NotPetya wiper worm infected critical domain controllers at shipping conglomerate A.P. Moller Maersk, which claimed the resulting disruptions [caused more than \\$300 million in damages](#).

Intel 471 researchers point to a late-September incident in which credentials for access to a Malaysian shipping company's computers were advertised on the underground. A week later, attackers encrypted the company's data and demanded a ransom, Intel 471's Otto [wrote in a Nov. 2 blog post](#).

While these incidents indicate attackers see tempting targets in companies that form the backbone of the global supply chain, he says, adversaries don't specifically prefer to compromise shipping and logistics companies.

"There has not been any direct conversation that we have observed that point to RaaS [ransomware-as-a-service] crews going after shipping or logistics companies solely for the notion that it will cause further chaos in the global supply chain," he says. "RaaS crews go after any and all targets largely for financial gain."

The evidence of credential sales mainly focuses on access credentials advertised for sale by various members of an underground forum. In July, for example, a new member claimed to have credentials for 50 companies, stolen after compromising a variety of virtual private networking appliances and software. In October, a new member in another cybercrime forum boasted about access to a score of computers in a US-based freight-forwarding firm.

Another organization in the United Kingdom suffered an attack through its SonicWall installation, while a Bangladesh-based shipping and logistics company was compromised using a vulnerability in PulseSecure, Intel 471 claimed, based on the evidence in cybercrime forums.

Even though attackers do not appear to be narrowly focused on compromising supply chain companies, the credential theft suggests the increase in attacks on maritime and transportation networks will continue. Since 2019, the number of cyberattacks on shipping and logistics companies has tripled, with supply chain disruptions expected to cause delays for approximately one month every four years, according to a [report on cybersecurity attacks on logistics firms](#) by security firm BlueVoyant.

"Unfortunately, these widespread vulnerabilities are still unaddressed in a time of increased scrutiny and reliance on supply chains — as countries wait for efficient and safe vaccine distribution programs, and as entire work-from-home economies rely on global shipping more than ever," the BlueVoyant report states.

Both companies argue that businesses need to better protect their credentials, use additional factors of authentication, and monitor cybercrime forums to detect breaches as early as possible.

	"[G]iven that attackers like to spend time conducting reconnaissance inside corporate networks, monitoring credentials can be the first signal that a ransomware attack could be close," Intel 471's Otto says. "Being proactive can go a long way to thwarting a ransomware attack, so seeing your company's credentials on the cybercrime underground should be a huge signal that something needs to be done in your network."
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HEADLINE	11/02 Phishing, spam lures aim: steal credentials
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/phishing-and-spam-lures-feature-sports-aim-to-steal-credentials
GIST	<p>Attackers continue to use phishing and spam as a primary way to steal credentials from unwary users, with e-mails carrying links to more than 5.6 million phishing sites and laden with 36 million malware attachments, new data shows.</p> <p>Software security firm Kaspersky's new quarterly review of spam and phishing data found that the most popular subjects in the e-mails included a variety of sports — including the delayed Euro 2020 soccer tournament and the Tokyo Olympics — and video games, with popular schemes including support scams, which aim to get victims to call with credit-card information, and COVID-19 scams, which aim to collect sensitive information on victims.</p> <p>Overall, spam accounted for 45% of global e-mail traffic, down 1% from the previous quarter and roughly even with Q1 2021. The messages usually redirected recipients to phishing sites for major brands or, in another popular tactic, used a purported charge on a major brand's site to scare users into calling support, stated Tatyana Scherbakova, a senior Web analyst at Kaspersky, in the quarterly report.</p> <p>"E-mails inviting the recipient to contact support continue to be spam regulars. If previously they were dominated by IT topics ... recently we have seen a rise in the number of e-mails talking about unexpected purchases, bank card transactions or account deactivation requests," she said. "Most likely, the change of subject matter is an attempt to reach a wider audience: messages about unintentional spending and the risk of losing an account can frighten users more than abstract technical problems."</p> <p>Phishing and spam remain the most common online attack encountered by companies, with 87% of security professionals saying their companies regularly detect such attacks, compared with the second most-common attack type, common viruses, which 75% of companies regularly detect, according to a Dark Reading survey of technology and cybersecurity professionals.</p> <p>Attackers continue to switch up their tactics. In September, a phishing campaign used a legitimate domain to sneak past the domain reputation used by many security applications as a first line of defense. The phishing attack landed in 75,000 inboxes in a campaign that aimed to steal corporate credentials. In June, security firm Agari found that half of compromised credentials are typically verified within the first 12 hours.</p> <p>"Once entered, account details are forwarded to the cybercriminals, completely bypassing malware detection software," stated Crane Hassold, senior director of threat research at Agari, in a blog post. "From there, those criminals can do what they want — often for years and without being detected. And now with enterprise migration toward cloud-based email and services, credential phishing is more popular than ever."</p> <p>In its quarterly report, Kaspersky noted that global Internet portals and online stores are the brand categories most often used as phishing bait, each accounting for almost 21%. The third most-common brands come from the banking industry, which accounted for 12%.</p> <p>Russia Leads in Spam</p> <p>Among countries, Russia is the largest source of spam, accounting for 25% of all traffic, while Germany accounts for 14%, China for 10% and the United States for 9%. The top targeted country for phishing and</p>

spam is Spain, which is targeted by almost 10% of all malicious messages, while Russia accounted for 7%, and Italy for about 5%, according to Kaspersky's quarterly report.

The credential-stealing Agensla Trojan accounted for 10% of all malware detected, jumping by 3 percentage points from the previous quarter. The other top malicious attachments included Badun spyware at 7%, the Noon spyware at 5%, and the Taskun malware at 4%.

Among popular targets are sporting events, with some phishing attacks promising "free live broadcasts," but then attempting to charge a subscription for a phantom service. Sports video games — especially football (or what the United States refers to as soccer) — is also a popular target of phishing attacks, which promise a bonus from major game makers but are really an attempt to steal account credentials.

Support spam continues to be popular. Among the most common are e-mail messages that purport to be notices of a significant charge to a credit card from a known vendor to convince the recipient to call a fake support number.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Squid Game crypto scam; \$millions yanked
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/squid-game-coin-crypto-scam/
GIST	<p>LUKE HARTFORD WAS first tipped off to the new, rising cryptocurrency thanks to a reply guy. The tweet was nestled under a post by Carl Martin, a Swedish cryptocurrency analyst and YouTuber, on October 27. Martin was discussing the price of the Shiba Inu alt coin, which he believed could fall to zero.</p> <p>It was there that Hartford, a structural engineer from Sydney, Australia, read a tip from a user by the name of @jonhree112 that alerted him to the latest cryptocurrency on the rise. Its price had increased 1,000 percent and was looking like it had headroom for 200 percent more. At the time, the price of each coin was 72 cents. "Better buy before \$1.00," wrote @jonhree112.</p> <p>The coin was called Squid Game, based on—but not affiliated with—the runaway Netflix series of the same name. "The coin harnessed the zeitgeist for the Netflix series <i>Squid Game</i> by apparently offering obsessed gamers access to a play-to-earn game," says Katherine Wooler, managing director at UK crypto wealth platform Dacxi. The project's whitepaper, published on its now-defunct website, promised big things for investors—but sounded awfully like a Ponzi scheme. "The more people join, the larger [sic] reward pool will be," it promised.</p> <p>Hartford was an experienced crypto trader, having been involved in the world since 2017. He had seen the meteoric rise of Shiba Inu, an apparent joke meme coin that had enjoyed a 900 percent rise in under a month, muscling its way into the top 10 cryptocurrencies in the world in the process. And he saw the Squid Game coin capturing the zeitgeist in a similar way. He wanted to get in on the ground floor. So on October 28 he bought in.</p> <p>Hartford wasn't a rookie, so he looked at BscScan, which registers all transactions on the Binance platform, before investing. There were some comments from people warning the Squid Game coin could be a scam: Coming from nowhere, it seemed too good to be true, and it was likely to infringe on trademarks and so could end up coming to nothing. But Hartford ignored them. "I wanted to get in as soon as possible," he says. He bought \$300 worth of Squid Game coin when each was worth around 90 cents, sat back, and watched. First it crossed \$1, earning him a 10 percent return on his investment. Then \$2. Then \$3. "I watched it keep going up that night, getting pretty excited that I'd doubled or tripled my money in a few hours," he recalls. When Hartford woke up the next morning, the Squid Game coin had hit \$5. His \$300 had ballooned into more than \$1,660. He was overjoyed.</p> <p>But something weird was happening. On the morning of October 29, when he searched the \$SQUID hashtag on Twitter, he saw people tweeting that they couldn't sell their holdings. Others corrected those struggling to cash out, explaining they needed to buy marbles, which were obtained through a pay-to-play game organized by the project's owners, in order to sell. Hartford paused for a moment. "I wasn't sure at that stage if I'd been scammed or not," he says.</p>

Whatever misgivings he had were quelled by the rising price of the coin: The Squid Game coin kept surging and drew the attention of major news outlets like [the BBC](#), [CNBC](#) and others, who reported uncritically on its incredible rise. “Media coverage failed to point out that there was no official tie-in with the Netflix series, thus providing an unwarranted veneer of respectability,” says Wooller. “More responsible media coverage is required; those of us who work in the industry often despair at some of the mistruth, rumor, and downright drivel often published about crypto.”

Hartford decided to buy \$50 in marbles on October 31 as an experiment to see if there was a way to get his money out. Hartford’s initial \$300 investment was worth \$200,000 as the Squid Game coin rose to \$600 per token. It’d eventually rise to a peak of \$2,861, which would make Hartford just short of \$1 million. In theory. In reality, the whole thing was a scam. And Hartford was just one of its many victims.

Just after 1:38 pm UTC on November 1, \$3.36 million that had been invested into Squid Game coin was [yanked out of the project](#) by its creators. The liquidity pool in the exchange disappeared in an instant, and within 10 minutes the coin was almost worthless, trading at [one-third of a cent](#).

“Anyone can spin up a token and liquidity pool, so it is a common risk for new projects run by anons,” says Patrick McCorry, CEO of PISA Research and formerly an assistant professor in cryptocurrencies and security engineering at King’s College London.

Hartford realized it was too good to be true when he started reading more and more tweets about it. The fact that the chart never once moved downwards, instead constantly going up, was another giveaway. Yet he’s not angry about the uncritical coverage of the coin’s rise, nor about the \$300 he lost. “To me, crypto is about a free market without regulation,” he says. “I don’t think people who want deregulation can complain when things like this happen. You live by the sword, you die by the sword. That’s crypto.”

The project’s owners did not respond to a request for comment sent to a support email contained within the white paper produced to promote their project. But the Squid Game coin scam isn’t the first time investors have realized they’ve been fleeced as coin creators abscond with their funds. One notable recent example among many saw the creator of SushiSwap, another highly touted token, [disappear with \\$13 million in September 2020](#) in what investors feared was a “rug pull.” The creator ended up returning the coins after an outcry, but then disappeared soon afterward.

“Rug pulls happen when there are large holders of the coin who can freely trade it, and the market for that token is not deep or highly liquid,” says McCorry.

The way the Squid Games coin scam worked is simple, as far as crypto goes. It takes advantage of the liquidity pool that exists between the Squid tokens issued and commensurate tokens (BNB tokens) issued by Binance, the cryptocurrency exchange. The team behind the Squid Games coin issued their tokens and held the majority of the supply. That allowed them to transfer the value of the Squid Games coins into BNB tokens, which they then stole away. The theft is public, but the scammers used a mixing and tumbling service called Tornado Cash to try to obscure their tracks. “If you own so many tokens, then you can essentially just perform trades that take all BNB out of the pool,” says McCorry.

[Eight wallets out of the 43,455 addresses](#) tied to Squid Games coins hold more than 1 percent of all tokens in circulation, according to BscScan. One such account, tagged by Ethereum analytics company Etherscan as an account that definitively pulled the rug out from under investors, held 5 percent of all the tokens.

That same account transferred \$3.36 million to another wallet. “The ability to rug pull just depends on how liquid the market is,” says McCorry. For instance, it depends on how many coins it would take to drain the market by snatching all the valuable coins for themselves.

The Squid Game scam almost certainly won’t be the last, says McCorry—especially if people buy in without doing their due diligence. But to really tackle the problem, regulation is required. “It needs to be global, comprehensive, and proportionate to what is now a \$2.6 trillion industry,” says Wooller.

HEADLINE	11/02 Facebook to shutter facial recognition
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/technology/facebook-facial-recognition.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Business
GIST	<p>Facebook plans to shut down its decade-old facial recognition system this month, deleting the face scan data of more than one billion users and effectively eliminating a feature that has fueled privacy concerns, government investigations, a class-action lawsuit and regulatory woes.</p> <p>Jerome Pesenti, vice president of artificial intelligence at Meta, Facebook's newly named parent company, said in a blog post on Tuesday that the social network was making the change because of “many concerns about the place of facial recognition technology in society.” He added that the company still saw the software as a powerful tool, but “every new technology brings with it potential for both benefit and concern, and we want to find the right balance.”</p> <p>The decision shuts a feature that was introduced in December 2010 so that Facebook users could save time. The facial-recognition software automatically identified people who appeared in users’ digital photo albums and suggested users “tag” them all with a click, linking their accounts to the images. Facebook now has built one of the largest repositories of digital photos in the world, partly thanks to this software.</p> <p>Facial-recognition technology, which has advanced in accuracy and power in recent years, has increasingly been the focus of debate because of how it can be misused by governments, law enforcement and companies. In China, authorities use the capabilities to track and control the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim minority. In the United States, law enforcement has turned to the software to aid policing, leading to fears of overreach and mistaken arrests. Some cities and states have banned or limited the technology to prevent potential abuse.</p> <p>Facebook only used its facial-recognition capabilities on its own site and did not sell its software to third parties. Even so, the feature became a privacy and regulatory headache for the company. Privacy advocates repeatedly raised questions about how much facial data Facebook had amassed and what the company could do with such information. Images of faces that are found on social networks can be used by start-ups and other entities to train facial-recognition software.</p> <p>When the Federal Trade Commission fined Facebook a record \$5 billion to settle privacy complaints in 2019, the facial recognition software was among the concerns. Last year, the company also agreed to pay \$650 million to settle a class-action lawsuit in Illinois that accused Facebook of violating a state law that requires residents’ consent to use their biometric information, including their “face geometry.”</p> <p>The social network made its facial recognition technology announcement as it also grapples with intense public scrutiny. Lawmakers and regulators have been up in arms over the company in recent months after a former Facebook employee, Frances Haugen, leaked thousands of internal documents that showed the firm was aware of how it enabled the spread of misinformation, hate speech and violence-inciting content.</p> <p>The revelations have led to congressional hearings and regulatory inquiries. Last week, Mark Zuckerberg, the chief executive, renamed Facebook’s parent company as Meta and said he would shift resources toward building products for the next online frontier, a digital world known as the metaverse.</p> <p>The change affects more than a third of Facebook’s daily users who had facial recognition turned on for their accounts, according to the company. That meant they received alerts when new photos or videos of them were uploaded to the social network. The feature had also been used to flag accounts that might be impersonating someone else and was incorporated into software that described photos to blind users.</p> <p>“Making this change required us to weigh the instances where facial recognition can be helpful against the growing concerns about the use of this technology as a whole,” said Jason Grosse, a Meta spokesman.</p>

Although Facebook plans to delete more than one billion facial recognition templates, which are digital scans of facial features, by December, it will not eliminate the software that powers the system, which is an advanced algorithm called DeepFace. The company has also not ruled out incorporating facial recognition technology into future products, Mr. Grosse said.

Privacy advocates nonetheless applauded the decision.

“Facebook getting out of the face recognition business is a pivotal moment in the growing national discomfort with this technology,” said Adam Schwartz, a senior lawyer with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a civil liberties organization. “Corporate use of face surveillance is very dangerous to people’s privacy.”

Facebook is not the first large technology company to pull back on facial recognition software. [Amazon](#), [Microsoft](#) and [IBM](#) have paused or ceased selling their facial recognition products to law enforcement in recent years, while expressing concerns about privacy and [algorithmic bias](#) and calling for [clearer regulation](#).

Facebook’s facial recognition software has a long and expensive history. When the software was rolled out to Europe in 2011, data protection authorities there said the move was illegal and that the company needed consent to analyze photos of a person and extract the unique pattern of an individual face. In 2015, the technology also led to the filing of the class action suit in Illinois.

Over the last decade, the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based privacy advocacy group, filed two [complaints](#) about Facebook’s use of facial recognition with the F.T.C. When the F.T.C. fined Facebook in 2019, it [named](#) the site’s confusing privacy settings around facial recognition as one of the reasons for the penalty.

“This was a known problem that we called out over 10 years ago but it dragged out for a long time,” said Alan Butler, EPIC’s executive director. He said he was glad Facebook had made the decision, but added that the protracted episode exemplified the need for more robust U.S. privacy protections.

“Every other modern democratic society and country has a data protection regulator,” Mr. Butler said. “The law is not well designed to address these problems. We need more clear legal rules and principles and a regulator that is actively looking into these issues day in and day out.”

Mr. Butler also called for Facebook to do more to prevent its photos from being used to power other companies’ facial recognition systems, such as [Clearview AI](#) and [PimEyes](#), start-ups that have scraped photos from the public web, including from Facebook and from its sister app, Instagram.

In Meta’s blog post, Mr. Pesenti wrote that facial recognition’s “long-term role in society needs to be debated in the open” and that the company “will continue engaging in that conversation and working with the civil society groups and regulators who are leading this discussion.”

Meta has discussed adding facial recognition capabilities to a future product. In an internal meeting in February, an employee asked if the company would let people “mark their faces as unsearchable” if future versions of a planned smart glasses device incorporated facial recognition technology, according to attendees. The meeting was [first reported by BuzzFeed News](#).

In the meeting, Andrew Bosworth, a longtime company executive who will become Meta’s chief technology officer next year, told employees that facial recognition technology had real benefits but acknowledged its risks, according to attendees and [his tweets](#). In September, the company introduced [a pair of glasses](#) with a camera, speakers and a computer processing chip in partnership with Ray-Ban; it did not include facial recognition capabilities.

“We’re having discussions externally and internally about the potential benefits and harms,” Mr. Grosse, the Meta spokesman, said. “We’re meeting with policymakers, civil society organizations and privacy

	advocates from around the world to fully understand their perspectives before introducing this type of technology into any future products.”
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HEADLINE	11/02 Common attack vectors for ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.cybereason.com/blog/what-are-the-most-common-attack-vectors-for-ransomware
GIST	<p>There’s been record growth of ransomware attacks in 2021. A recent report documented 304.7 million attack attempts in the first six months of the year, as reported by Threatpost. That’s 100,000 more attempts than the total volume logged in all of 2020.</p> <p>These ransomware attacks involved a variety of infection vectors. Even so, ransomware actors prefer some methods over others. Researchers found that unsecured Microsoft Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) connections accounted for over half of all ransomware attacks, for instance. This was followed by email phishing at approximately a quarter of all ransomware infections, and the exploitation of software vulnerabilities at 12%. Let’s look at how each of these three delivery vectors lead to a ransomware attack.</p> <p>UNSECURED REMOTE DESKTOP PROTOCOL CONNECTIONS</p> <p>A proprietary protocol developed by Microsoft, RDP enables users to remotely connect to other computers over a network connection. This protocol necessitates that both computers involved in the connection run RDP software. RDP typically “hears” that connection through defined listening ports such as TCP port 3389 and UDP port 3389, per Microsoft’s documentation.</p> <p>The issue is when organizations leave their RDP ports exposed online. As noted by ZDNet, some digital crime groups specialize in scanning the web for these exposed ports. When they find them, they carry out brute-force attacks to gain access. They can then sell that access on dark web marketplaces, giving attackers like ransomware groups an opportunity through which they can establish a foothold in an organization’s network.</p> <p>EMAIL PHISHING</p> <p>Ransomware is just one of the threat categories that’s commonly distributed by phishing emails. A typical attack attempt begins when a user receives a malicious email that instructs them to open a tainted file attachment. It can arrive as a PDF document, a ZIP archive, or a Microsoft Office file that tricks a recipient into enabling macros. An attacker can use any of those file formats to trick the recipient into running an executable file that downloads ransomware onto their machine.</p> <p>Phishing emails don’t always use attachments to infect recipients with malware. They can also direct victims to click on a malicious link. If they do click, the campaign can redirect the recipient to a website containing fake software downloads or other ruses designed to distribute ransomware or exploit kits as their payload.</p> <p>EXPLOITATION OF SOFTWARE VULNERABILITIES</p> <p>Let’s revisit the phishing scenario discussed above in which an attack email’s embedded link redirects a recipient to a website containing an exploit kit. A phishing email might be the initial attack vector in this case, but it’s not the ransomware payload’s delivery vector. The exploit kit functions as the delivery vector in that it evaluates the visitor’s web browser, operating system, and/or other software for vulnerabilities. If it detects a supported vulnerability, the exploit kit activates its exploit code and uses it to install ransomware on the victim’s machine.</p> <p>This type of scenario is known as a “drive-by download.” Email attackers can set up their own websites to conduct a drive-by download, but in doing so, they need to use redirect chains, typo-squatting, and other evasive tactics so that email gateways won’t flag their embedded links outright. Alternatively, attackers can attempt to compromise a legitimate website and misuse its reputation to distribute malicious code.</p> <p>HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST RANSOMWARE DELIVERY VECTORS</p> <p>Fortunately, organizations can take several steps to protect themselves against the ransomware delivery vectors discussed above. They can block RDP port 3389 if they don’t need to use it, for instance. If they</p>

need some systems to support RDP, they can put them behind a firewall and monitor them for potential signs of abuse.

As for phishing and drive-by downloads, organizations can conduct phishing simulations across their entire workforce on a regular basis and confirm that their vulnerability management programs cover the plugins and other software that help to power their websites.

Organizations can also focus on augmenting their security posture so that they can defend against ransomware and other threats. One of the ways they can do that is by implementing an [anti-ransomware solution](#) that leverages both Indicators of Compromise (IOCs) and Indicators of Behavior (IOBs), the more subtle attack activity that can reveal an attack earlier.

Such a tool allows organizations to visualize the entire story of a ransomware attack wherever it's occurring in their environment, even an operation that's not been detected elsewhere before, so that their security teams can quickly shut it down.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Logistics industry, shipping firms targeted
SOURCE	https://intel471.com/blog/shipping-companies-ransomware-credentials
GIST	<p>One of the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is the havoc it has wreaked on the global supply chain. There have been extreme fluctuations in the availability of goods, ports around the world are severely backlogged with full containers, and shipping and logistics companies are having trouble finding workers to transport cargo. It is a precarious situation for this sector, especially as the holiday season approaches.</p> <p>With things as volatile as they are, a cybersecurity crisis at one of these logistics and shipping companies could have a calamitous impact on the global consumer economy. Over the past few months, Intel 471 has observed network access brokers selling credentials or other forms of access to shipping and logistics companies on the cybercrime underground. These companies operate air, ground and maritime cargo transport on several continents that are responsible for moving billions of dollars worth of goods around the world.</p> <p>The actors responsible for selling these credentials range from newcomers to the most prolific network access brokers that Intel 471 tracks. These actors have obtained these credentials by leveraging well-known vulnerabilities in remote access solutions like Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), VPN, Citrix, and SonicWall, among others.</p> <p>Among the advertisements observed by Intel 471:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within the span of two weeks in July 2021, one new actor and one well-known access broker claimed to have access to a network owned by a Japanese container transportation and shipping company. The new actor included the company's credentials in a dump of approximately 50 companies, allegedly all obtained via compromised Citrix, Cisco, virtual private network (VPN) and/or remote desktop protocol (RDP) accounts. The well-known actor claimed to have access to several accounts belonging to the company, but did not reveal how they were obtained.• In August 2021, one actor known to work with groups that have deployed Conti ransomware claimed access to corporate networks belonging to a U.S.-based transportation management and trucking software supplier and a U.S.-based commodity transportation services company. The actor gave the group access to an undisclosed botnet powered by malware that included a virtual network computing (VNC) function. The group used the botnet to download and execute a Cobalt Strike beacon on infected machines, so group members in charge of breaching computer networks received access directly via a Cobalt Strike beacon session.• In September 2021, an actor with ties to the FiveHands ransomware group claimed access to hundreds of companies, including a U.K.-based logistics company. It's most likely that access was obtained through a SonicWall vulnerability, given that FiveHands is known to use that access to launch its ransomware attacks. Additionally in September, a new actor claimed to have gained

access to a Bangladesh-based shipping and logistics company through a vulnerability in the PulseSecure VPN.

- **In October 2021**, a newcomer to a well-known cybercrime forum claimed access to the network of a U.S.-based freight forwarding company, alleging that he had had local administrator rights and could access 20 computers on the company's network. The actor claimed he obtained the credentials through a path traversal vulnerability in Fortinet's FortiGate secure sockets layer (SSL) VPN web portal (CVE-2018-13379). Also in October, a newcomer on a different well-known cybercrime forum claimed access to a Malaysian logistics company. Those credentials were part of a package that the actor was selling for \$5,000. It was unknown how he allegedly obtained those credentials.

The world has previously seen the economic damage that can come from a cyber attack on the shipping and logistics industry. The NotPetya attack in 2017 devastated Dutch shipping and maritime giant Maersk, [shutting down several of its ports](#) and costing the company \$300 million to replace systems damaged by the malware. Adam Banks, head of technology at Maersk, told [a business publication in 2019](#) that "there was 100 [percent] destruction of anything based on Microsoft that was attached to the network."

We have seen attackers try to go after ports this year. In August, suspected foreign government-backed hackers [breached a computer network](#) at the Port of Houston, one of the largest ports on the U.S. Gulf Coast. However, early detection of the incident thwarted any attempts to impede business operations.

Those two incidents show that the logistics industry is constantly targeted, and the ramifications of a cyberattack can have a crippling ripple effect on the global economy. At a time when this sector is struggling to keep things operating, a successful attack could bring this industry to a screeching halt, resulting in unforeseen dire consequences for every part of the consumer economy. It's extremely beneficial that security teams in the shipping industry monitor and track adversaries, their tools and malicious behavior to stop attacks from these criminals. Proactively addressing vulnerabilities in times of high alert avoids further stress on already constrained business operations.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Ransomware targets mergers, acquisitions
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-ransomware-targets-companies-during-mergers-and-acquisitions/
GIST	<p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warns that ransomware gangs are targeting companies involved in "time-sensitive financial events" such as corporate mergers and acquisitions to make it easier to extort their victims.</p> <p>In a private industry notification published on Monday, the FBI said ransomware operators would use the financial information collected before attacks as leverage to force victims to comply with ransom demands.</p> <p>"The FBI assesses ransomware actors are very likely using significant financial events, such as mergers and acquisitions, to target and leverage victim companies for ransomware infections," the federal law enforcement agency said.</p> <p>"During the initial reconnaissance phase, cyber criminals identify non-publicly available information, which they threaten to release or use as leverage during the extortion to entice victims to comply with ransom demands," the FBI added.</p> <p>"Impending events that could affect a victim's stock value, such as announcements, mergers, and acquisitions, encourage ransomware actors to target a network or adjust their timeline for extortion where access is established."</p> <p>Ransomware gangs target victims' stock price</p>

For instance, [last year](#), the REvil (Sodinokibi) ransomware gang said they were considering adding an auto-email script that would reach out to stock exchanges, such as NASDAQ, to let them know that companies were hit by ransomware to impact their stock price.

REvil is also [sifting through stolen data](#) after breaching companies' servers to find damaging information that can be used to force their victims into paying the ransoms.

More recently, DarkSide ransomware announced that they would share insider info on companies trading on NASDAQ or other stock markets with traders [who want to short the stock price to make a quick profit](#). The FBI also shared several instances when ransomware groups have used inside or public info of ongoing merger or acquisition negotiations to target vulnerable companies:

- *In early 2020, a ransomware actor using the moniker "Unknown" made a post on the Russian hacking forum "Exploit" that encouraged using the NASDAQ stock exchange to influence the extortion process. Following this posting, unidentified ransomware actors negotiating a payment with a victim during a March 2020 ransomware event stated, "We have also noticed that you have stocks. If you will not engage us for negotiation we will leak your data to the nasdaq and we will see what's gonna (sic) happen with your stocks."*
- *Between March and July 2020, at least three publicly traded US companies actively involved in mergers and acquisitions were victims of ransomware during their respective negotiations. Of the three pending mergers, two of the three were under private negotiations.*
- *A November 2020 technical analysis of Pyxie RAT, a remote access trojan that often precedes Defray777/RansomEXX ransomware infections, identified several keyword searches on a victim's network indicating an interest in the victim's current and near-future stock share price. These keywords included 10-q1, 10-sb2, n-csr3, nasdaq, marketwired, and newswire.*
- *In April 2021, Darkside ransomware4 actors posted a message on their blog site to show their interest in impacting a victim's share price. The message stated, "Now our team and partners encrypt many companies that are trading on NASDAQ and other stock exchanges. If the company refuses to pay, we are ready to provide information before the publication, so that it would be possible to earn in the reduction price of shares. Write to us in 'Contact Us' and we will provide you with detailed information."*

Paying ransoms not encouraged

The FBI says that it does not encourage paying a ransom to ransomware gangs and advises companies against it as it's not guaranteed that paying will protect them from data leaks or future attacks.

Paying ransoms motivates the criminals behind ransomware operations to target even more victims and incentivizes more cybercrime groups to follow their lead and join them in conducting illegal activities.

However, the FBI recognizes the damage a ransomware attack can do to a business since executives may be forced to consider paying a ransomware actor to protect shareholders, customers, or employees. The FBI strongly recommends reporting such incidents to their [local FBI field office](#).

The FBI also provided measures to help system admins and cybersecurity professionals guard the networks against ransomware attack attempts.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	11/03 Roadside bomb targets Taliban; kills 2
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/roadside-bomb-targets-taliban-kills-afghanistan-hub-80943770
GIST	KABUL, Afghanistan -- A roadside bomb struck a Taliban patrol in a stronghold of Islamic State militants in eastern Afghanistan on Wednesday, killing two people and wounding three, witnesses said.

	<p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the attack bore the hallmarks of previous IS strikes against the Taliban. The two groups are bitter rivals, and IS has stepped up attacks since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August.</p> <p>Wednesday's bomb went off in the city of Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province.</p> <p>A Taliban district commander in the city confirmed the blast and said four Taliban fighters were wounded. The commander, who identified himself as Mubariz—and like many Afghans goes by one name—did not provide details about those killed in the attack, saying the investigation continues.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Taliban officials have been reluctant or slow to release details about Taliban fatalities, in an apparent attempt to play down the extent of the damage being inflicted by IS.</p> <p>The Jalalabad attack came a day after IS attackers set off an explosion at the gate of a 400-bed military hospital in the capital of Kabul, killing three women, a child and three Taliban guards said. Five assailants were also killed in the attack.</p> <p>Taliban officials said guards prevented the attackers from entering the hospital.</p> <p>IS claimed that one of those killed in the hospital attack was a senior Taliban commander who had played a leading role in the group's Aug. 15 takeover of Kabul. Taliban officials said they could not immediately confirm the commander had been killed.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Tunisia: tunnel near French envoy house
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/tunisia-finds-tunnel-near-french-envoys-residence-anti-terrorism-forces-2021-11-03/
GIST	<p>TUNIS, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Tunisia has discovered a tunnel near the French ambassador's residence from a house frequented by a known extremist, and anti-terrorism forces are investigating, the Tunisian Interior Ministry said on Wednesday.</p> <p>French diplomats were not immediately available for comment.</p> <p>Tunisian security forces have thwarted most militant plots in recent years and have grown better at responding to those that occur say Western diplomats.</p> <p>The last major attacks took place in 2015 when militants killed scores of people in two separate assaults at a museum in Tunis and a beach resort in Sousse.</p> <p>The French residence is located in a walled compound in the upscale suburb of La Marsa, with private housing on two sides.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Foreign fighter surge bolsters IS, AQ
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/foreign-fighter-surge-possible-as-isis-could-build-attack-capability-in-afghanistan-in-6-12-months/
GIST	<p>The international community needs to be “vigilant” about the “possibility” of reconstituting terror groups in Afghanistan drawing a surge of foreign fighters to the region, the Senate Armed Services Committee heard during a hearing last week on security in the region after withdrawal.</p> <p>“We are examining and learning from the past, reckoning with the uncomfortable truth that despite decades and billions of dollars of U.S. investment, the Afghan military evaporated in the face of the Taliban assault,” Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl said. “Additionally, we are turning to the future, bolstering our capacity to engage in over-the- horizon counterterrorism operations to ensure that</p>

no threat emanating from Afghanistan can harm our homeland or our interests even as we refocus the department on the challenges posed by China, Russia, and other competitors and adversaries.”

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley earlier told the committee that there could be a resurgence of international terrorism coming from the region within 12 to 36 months. Kahl said the assessment “depends on which group we’re talking about.”

“I think the intelligence community currently assesses that both ISIS-K and al-Qaeda have the intent to conduct external operations, including against the United States. But neither currently has the capability to do so. We could see ISIS-K generate that capability and somewhere between six or 12 months,” he said. “I think the current assessments by the intelligence community is that al-Qaeda would take a year or two to reconstitute that capability.”

“We have considerable evidence that they have the intent... the question at the moment is the capability.”

The U.S. has had conversations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but has not yet secured base arrangements closer to Afghanistan. Kahl characterized the counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan as “pretty good.”

“Pakistan is a challenging actor, but they don’t want Afghanistan to be a safe haven for terrorist attacks, external attacks, not just against Pakistan but against others,” he said. “They continue to give us access to Pakistani airspace and we’re in conversations about keeping that airspace open.”

Asked whether the Taliban can defeat ISIS in Afghanistan, Kahl replied that “the Taliban is highly motivated to go after ISIS-K,” but “their ability to do so, I think, is to be determined.” ISIS Khorasan, he said, has unknown assets but is believed to be not “nearly as well-resourced as ISIS in Iraq and Syria were back at the heyday” — yet “ISIS-K is obviously linked to the broader ISIS network globally.”

“We are deploying ISR over Afghanistan every single day,” he later added. “...We are sharing intelligence with regional partners and with our other partners, the UK and others, who are very focused on this problem set. So we will get after this challenge and we will try to grow our capability to get after it.”

After the Afghan withdrawal and evacuation, the Defense Department “remains focused on counterterrorism threats to the homeland,” J3 Joint Staff Director for Operations Lt. Gen. James Mingus testified. “While we reprioritize following the withdrawal in the short term, we are actively setting the conditions to ensure we remain situationally aware in our posture to mitigate and neutralize developing terrorist threats and streams.”

Counterterrorism resources for the region are now going to come from the Gulf region. “We’re able to project assets from the Gulf. We’re able to collect across all the sources of intelligence, fuse that and continue to analyze,” Mingus said. “And if necessary, take action in Afghanistan. As General McKenzie and the Chairman both indicated, it is harder, but we believe we have the assets in place right now, if necessary to disrupt and/or degrade the terrorist networks in Afghanistan.”

Mingus noted that the estimates of the timeframe it would take for ISIS and al-Qaeda to rebuild attack capability are “based on no U.S. or coalition intervention.”

Kahl stressed that that Taliban are “a ruthless authoritarian band” that should not get recognition as a legitimate government from the international community “unless they are a very different government than the one than they have — that they are now.” Their willingness to tamp down the activity of al-Qaeda, a longtime ally, is also yet to be determined.

Kahl reminded senators that “there are terrorist threats all over the globe,” with “the biggest ones” in Somalia, Yemen, and Syria. “I think the war as we know it isn’t continuing, but the terrorist threat continues,” he said.

“Frankly, for either al-Qaeda or ISIS-K, I do think we have to look about how events in Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world, could be Nigeria, could be Somalia, could be Yemen, could be Syria, can have a galvanizing effect on the internet and elsewhere that inspires recruits,” he said. “And I know that the Department of Homeland Security and our Intelligence Community is pretty focused on that.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Taliban's growing ISIS-K problem
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/7kbpmb/the-taliban-have-a-growing-isis-k-problem
GIST	<p>The Taliban face a growing insurgency from ISIS-K, a jihadist group inspired by Islamic State and founded by former Taliban fighters in early 2015.</p> <p>The group, which calls itself Islamic State in the Khorasan Province, locally known within Afghanistan as Daesh, came to global attention in the days after the Taliban takeover of Kabul, when it carried out a massive suicide bombing attack at one of the gates near Kabul airport, killing up to 200 people.</p> <p>Since then, ISIS-K has carried out a string of attacks, initially mainly in Jalalabad, in the heart of Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan that was once the group's stronghold. But in recent days and weeks, ISIS-K has claimed attacks in Kunar, Kunduz, Kandahar and Parwan, and in Kabul.</p> <p>Attacks at two Shia mosques at opposite ends of Afghanistan last month that killed dozens illustrated that threat that ISIS-K poses to the country. In the last weeks of October, ISIS through its online propaganda platforms on Telegram claimed 10 attacks against the Taliban.</p> <p>While no one has claimed responsibility, the Taliban blamed ISIS for an attack on the 400-bed Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan hospital in Kabul on Tuesday. Seven people including three women and a child died in the attack, according to a statement put out by Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid on Twitter. Reuters and other news agencies put the death toll much higher, at 25.</p> <p>Mujahid also wrote that five attackers were killed in a shootout that took 15 minutes, adding that five Taliban guards were injured.</p> <p>While some jihadist groups such as al Qaeda, Hamas and Syrian-based Hayat Tahir al-Sham (HTS) welcomed the Taliban's return to power after emerging victorious in a 20-year war against the US and its allies, ISIS-K sees the Taliban as a pro-US group that has – comparatively at least – softened its stance on certain issues and now seeks to establish ties with countries such as China and Russia. While the Taliban are focused on ruling within Afghanistan's borders, ISIS-K seeks the establishment of a wider caliphate in the region. ISIS-K claims many disaffected former Taliban fighters among its ranks.</p> <p>Ahmadullah Wasiq, the Taliban's deputy minister of information and culture, declined to comment when asked by VICE World News about the danger ISIS-K posed to Afghanistan. But previously, Taliban leaders have claimed that ISIS-K was being supported by “regional intelligence agencies” – a direct echo of the claims made against the Taliban by the previous western-backed government of Afghanistan.</p> <p>Some have predicted bloody clashes between ISIS-K and the Taliban. Russian President Vladimir Putin has claimed – without evidence – that ISIS has about 2,000 fighters alone in northern Afghanistan, but a Taliban spokesperson denied the claims, insisting that in a country “all-controlled” by the Taliban, ISIS can not find a place among the people.</p> <p>Michael Kugelman, deputy director of Asia Programme at the Wilson Centre, told VICE World News that he fears “some hardline Taliban members, bored and frustrated about the end of a war they can no longer fight, will shift allegiances and move to ISIS.”</p> <p>There's a risk that without proper attention paid to the threat posed by ISIS-K, the group could present a bigger challenge for the Taliban and the region. Under the previous western-backed government in</p>

Afghanistan, the authorities claimed that detained members of ISIS-K were not just disgruntled Taliban fighters but people from countries including Iran, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

While ISIS-K is intent on waging an insurgency against the Taliban, other jihadist groups have been “emboldened” by the group’s return to power in Afghanistan, Farhan Jefferey, a counterterrorism expert from Pakistan, told VICE World News via email

In September, United Nations experts warned that while the Taliban’s ambition may only extend to Afghanistan’s own borders, their return to power did create conditions where other jihadist groups could flourish, in an almost identical scenario prior to the US-led invasion of the country and start of the 20-year war in 2001. “A safe haven for al Qaeda is assured,” said Edmund Fitton-Brown, coordinator of an extremist monitoring group with the UN Security Council.

Al Qaeda’s core leadership and regional affiliates have repeatedly praised the Taliban’s victory – although some statements do not name the Taliban and instead focus on the defeat of the US and its allies.

“Al Qaeda certainly sees the Taliban victory in Afghanistan partly as its own victory against the US. After all, it was due to al Qaeda that the Afghan war started in the first place,” said Jeffery.

Wasiq, the Taliban deputy minister of information and culture, denied that al Qaeda fighters existed in Afghanistan. But their presence is well documented.

“It is very unlikely that the Taliban will abandon its ties with al Qaeda. Indeed, Taliban officials already acknowledge in private discussions that they have no plans of abandoning ties with al Qaeda,” added Jeffery, who is also the deputy director at ITCT, a London-based counter-terrorism centre.

Kugelman, the deputy director of Asia Programme at the Wilson Centre, said that al Qaeda was realistic that Afghanistan could and should not become its main base of operations.

“This is because [al Qaeda] is not sure about the Taliban’s future relationship with it, and it knows the possibility of US counter-terrorism strikes in Afghanistan is real,” he said, adding that al Qaeda is likely to keep a low profile in the country for now, and focus on aiding its regional affiliates, and other groups in the region such as the TTP – the Pakistani Taliban – and militant groups in Kashmir.

While historically most Taliban fighters have been Pashtun tribesmen, many foreign fighters now operate under their flag too. Reports in neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have claimed that in the Afghan provinces of Jawzan and Faryab – both of which have big populations of ethnic Uzbeks and Turkmens – there is a risk of Taliban-linked fighters striking beyond Afghanistan’s borders.

“The terrorism threat to Afghanistan’s neighbours is multifaceted” said Kugelman. “On the one hand, they face the heightened risk of attacks by galvanised jihadists. But there’s also the risk that radicals from these countries will travel to Afghanistan, take advantage of an environment more conducive for terrorism, receive training, and they return home to carry out attacks.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Taliban ban use of foreign currency
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/02/taliban-ban-foreign-currency-afghanistan/
GIST	<p>The Taliban in Afghanistan declared a total ban on the use of foreign currency Tuesday, a shock move that threatened to rattle an economy already cash-starved and nearing collapse.</p> <p>The group said in a statement that it was requiring Afghans to use the local currency, or afghani, in all transactions and that any violators would be prosecuted.</p> <p>U.S. dollars are widely used in Afghanistan for both formal and informal business. But the Taliban’s surprise takeover in August prompted a rush on banks and an abrupt end to foreign funding.</p>

	<p>“The use of foreign currency has a negative impact on the country’s economy,” the Taliban said, adding that “all citizens, shopkeepers, traders, businessmen and the general public” should conduct business using the afghani.</p> <p>The currency plunged to record lows as the Taliban seized power and international financial systems severed the group’s access to billions in reserves held by the central bank. Since then, trade has slowed, food prices have skyrocketed and salaries have gone unpaid.</p> <p>A staggering 50 percent of Afghanistan’s 40 million people now face acute hunger, the World Food Program said last week, and aid agencies are warning of a spiraling humanitarian crisis as winter approaches.</p> <p>The White House announced last week that it would provide nearly \$144 million in new aid to those affected by the crisis in Afghanistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Kabul: explosions, gun attack hit hospital
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/02/deadly-explosions-hit-military-hospital-in-kabul-afghanistan
GIST	<p>At least 25 people were killed and more than 50 wounded in an attack on Afghanistan’s biggest military hospital, in central Kabul, on Tuesday, in which two heavy blasts were followed by an assault by gunmen, a Taliban official said.</p> <p>A Taliban spokesperson, Bilal Karimi, said the explosions took place at the entrance of the 400-bed Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan hospital, after which gunmen opened fire. Four of the attackers were killed by Taliban security forces and a fifth was captured, he said.</p> <p>The blasts add to a list of attacks and killings since the Taliban’s victory over the western-backed government in August, undermining their claim to have restored security to Afghanistan after decades of war.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the operation was typical of the attacks mounted by Islamic State. It follows a string of bombings by the group, which has emerged as the biggest threat to Taliban control of Afghanistan.</p> <p>While there was no official confirmation of the casualty toll, a Taliban security official said at least 25 people had been killed and more than 50 wounded.</p> <p>A health worker at the hospital, who managed to escape, said he heard a large explosion followed by a couple of minutes of gunfire. About 10 minutes later, there was a second, larger explosion, he said. He said it was not clear whether the blasts and the gunfire were inside the sprawling hospital complex.</p> <p>Islamic State, which has carried out a series of attacks on mosques and other targets since the Taliban’s seizure of Kabul in August, mounted a complex attack on the hospital in 2017, killing more than 30 people.</p> <p>The group’s attacks have caused mounting worries outside Afghanistan about the potential for the country to become a haven for militant groups, as it was when an al-Qaida group attacked the US in 2001.</p> <p>The situation has been worsened by a spiralling economic crisis that has threatened millions of Afghans with poverty as winter approaches. The abrupt withdrawal of international support after the Taliban’s victory has brought Afghanistan’s fragile economy to the brink of collapse just as the country suffers a severe drought and the fear of hunger.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/03 Exercise: US troops humiliating surrender
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10159949/Royal-Marines-commandos-force-troops-humiliating-surrender-training-exercise.html
GIST	<p>Royal Marines commandos 'dominated' US troops and forced them into a humiliating surrender just days into a mass training exercise in the Mojave desert, it has been revealed today.</p> <p>British forces took part in a five-day mock battle at the US Marine Corps' Twentynine Palms base in southern California, one of the largest military training areas in the world, and achieved a decisive victory against their American counterparts.</p> <p>The Royal Marines, along with allied forces from Canada, the Netherlands and the UAE, destroyed or rendered inoperable nearly every US asset and finished the exercise holding more than 65 per cent of the training area, after beginning with less than 20 per cent.</p> <p>Combatants used paintball-style training ammunition, which fires with reduced pressure and velocity, along with hi-tech simulators for heavier firepower like artillery, and live ammo on expansive ranges.</p> <p>Seeing no opportunity for victory, American combatants asked for the exercise to be 'reset' halfway through the five-day exercise, having taken significant casualties from British commandos.</p> <p>Troops from 3 Commando Brigade and Taunton-based 40 Commando had spent the last two months in the Mojave Desert preparing for deployments next year. Their time in the US culminated with the five-day simulated conflict Green Dagger, which is designed to test the US Marine Corps prior to units deploying overseas.</p> <p>The mock battlefield covers more than 3,500 square kilometres of mountainous and desert terrain, including urban settings where actors, who are not following a script, play civilians who can choose to help or hinder the military forces.</p> <p>The Royal Marines trained with counterparts from the US, Canada, UAE and the Netherlands in the weeks before the main exercise.</p> <p>The British forces achieved their victory by targeting the American headquarters and equipment, severely hampering the ability of US combatants to launch counter-attacks.</p> <p>Artillery units also concentrated on eliminating vehicles and opposing artillery.</p> <p>A long-range commando assault with fighter jet support eventually defeated the American forces, who had launched a last-minute attack but were repelled.</p> <p>British forces were trialling the new Littoral Response Group (LRG) structure, which will be the new template for commandos - who are to become more flexible and mobile under reforms directed by First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin.</p> <p>LRGs are Royal Navy task groups centred around commando forces and set up to respond to world events.</p> <p>Following the restructuring of the Marines, Nato's northern and Baltic flanks will be covered by the UK-based LRG (North).</p> <p>LRG (South), built around Taunton-based 40 Commando, will be based around Oman's port of Duqm, operating with a focus on British military activity in the Indo-Pacific.</p>

	<p>Each LRG will be capable of working with the carrier strike group to assemble an expeditionary strike force which can operate anywhere in the world.</p> <p>The exercise focused around three urban sprawls which were defended by allied forces, the largest of which consisting of 1,200 buildings purpose built for military testing.</p> <p>The Marines won decisive battles early on and gained ground from their enemy, but amid a US Marines counter-attack, commandos carried out raids behind enemy lines.</p> <p>The exercise concluded with a last-minute assault by US forces, which was repelled.</p> <p>'Our success has proved the new commando force concept is more lethal and sophisticated than ever before and I am immensely proud of every member of the LRG and their vital contributions,' said Lieutenant Colonel Andy Dow, Commanding Officer of 40 Commando.</p> <p>'Operating alongside our partners from the USA, Netherlands, Canada and the UAE gives us a fantastic opportunity to test, integrate and continue to push our capabilities in new and innovative directions.</p> <p>'Throughout this deployment our focus has been on integrating game-changing capabilities from across the commando force to deliver disproportional effect in the face of a free-thinking peer adversary.'</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Trapped: Asian giant hornet near Blaine
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/authorities-find-asian-giant-hornet-in-another-invasive-species-trap-near-blaine
GIST	<p>BLAINE, Wash. - Authorities in British Columbia have found an Asian giant hornet in a trap near Blaine, Washington.</p> <p>According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), the hornet was caught in a Japanese beetle trap, another invasive species to Washington state.</p> <p>WSDA said the hornet was found "well within the flight distance from the US nests."</p> <p>WSDA will be working with British Columbia and US federal authorities to analyze DNA from the hornet in an attempt to see if it was from a U.S. nest in Blaine.</p> <p>So far this year, the state has eradicated about three Asian giant hornet nests-- most of them from Whatcom County.</p> <p>The most recent nest was eradicated just east of Blaine in late September. Ten combs were found on the tree.</p> <p>Officials said the queen they discovered was a slightly different color and that all the hornets were workers, which means no new nests would be created from it.</p> <p>The 2-inch-long invasive insects, first found near the U.S.-Canadian border in December 2019, are native to Asia and pose a threat to honeybees and native hornet species. While not particularly aggressive toward humans, their sting is extremely painful and repeated stings, though rare, can kill.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Jellyfish keep clogging nuke power plants
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/epx4mj/jellyfish-keep-attacking-nuclear-power-plants
GIST	Jellyfish are continuing to clog the cooling intake pipes of a nuclear power plant in Scotland, which has previously prompted a temporary shutdowns of the plant.

The Torness nuclear power plant has reported concerns regarding jellyfish as [far back](#) as 2011, when it was forced to shut down for nearly a week—at an [estimated cost](#) of \$1.5 million a day—because of the free-swimming marine animals.

In a short comment to Motherboard, EDF energy, which runs the Torness plant, said that “jellyfish blooms are an occasional issue for our power stations,” but also said that [media reports](#) claiming the plant had recently been taken offline because of jellyfish are “inaccurate.” “[There were] no emergency procedures this or last week related to jellyfish or otherwise,” a spokesperson said.

Like many other seaside power plants, the Torness plant uses seawater to prevent overheating. While there are measures in place to prevent aquatic life from entering the intake pipes, according to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, they are no match for the sheer number of jellyfish that come during so-called “jellyfish blooms.”

“Usually, screens prevent aquatic life and similar debris from being drawn into the power plants’ cooling system,” the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists [wrote](#) in a 2015 blog post. “But when sufficiently large volumes of jellyfish or other aquatic life are pulled in, they block the screens, reducing the volume of water coming in and forcing the reactor to shut down.”

While the case in Scotland has once again spotlighted concerns regarding the jellyfish and potential power plant shutdowns, these concerns are far from new. In 2008, a swarm of jellyfish [shut down](#) a nuclear power plant in California, and three years later [the same occurred](#) at a plant in Japan. In 2017, jellyfish [clogged](#) a power plant in Israel.

In response to the jellyfish clogging the plant in Scotland, a commercial drone company called RUAS reportedly asked the Scottish Civil Aviation Authority to allow it to fly surveillance drones over the area, [according](#) to the Scottish Herald.

However, researchers at the University of Cranfield have already been conducting a pilot as part of the UK Drones Pathfinder Programme which uses medium-altitude drones as “part of an early warning system which will allow the adjustment of water-cooling mechanisms to protect both electricity generation and the environment.”

“Any industry on the coast which uses seawater can find its operations complicated when seaweed or jellyfish blooms impact protective systems,” Angus Bloomfield, a marine biologist, is quoted as saying in a [press release](#) from the University of Cranfield. “They can damage machinery and even stop power generation, which could threaten stability of the electricity grid. An early warning system involving drones could allow industries in marine environments to act early and avoid the most dramatic effects these events can bring.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Alaska storm drops record rain; snow too
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/02/alaska-record-storm-rain-girdwood/
GIST	<p>GIRDWOOD, Alaska — A powerful, historic storm has walloped southern Alaska for days, unloading extreme amounts of precipitation and overwhelming its infrastructure in some areas.</p> <p>The deluge, intensified by climate change, has flooded communities south of Anchorage and transformed trickling waterways into raging rivers. Excessive amounts of snow, measured in feet, have buried the high terrain, and the long-lasting storm won’t fully relent until Wednesday.</p> <p>The historic rainfall generated by the storm, includes one of the top four heaviest two-day amounts ever observed in the state, nearly 20 inches.</p> <p>A fire hose of tropical moisture, the remnants of an atmospheric river, instigated the storm system, which will lash California and the Pacific Coast in the days ahead.</p>

“It started on the 29th, that Friday night, and basically persisted since,” said Mike Ottenweller, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Anchorage. “It’s still somewhat ongoing.”

Record rainfall

The moisture translated to exceptional rainfall in the lowlands, like in the Portage River Valley, where double-digit rainfall totals shattered previous records. Alyeska, Alaska, situated on the Kenai Peninsula where it meets the rest of Alaska, reported 9.53 inches on Halloween — the station’s highest daily total ever recorded.

At the Portage Glacier visitor center, 10.34 inches was measured Oct. 30. Its two-day rainfall over the weekend of 18.84 inches ranks as the fourth-highest on record in the state.

“It’s the furthest north location to report consecutive days of eight inches or more of rain,” said Ottenweller. “The only other place in Alaska that’s done that is Little Port, which is in southeast Alaska. It’s basically a rainforest down there.”

Ottenweller also noted that the 10.34-inch reading marks the first 10-inch day in Alaska since 2010, calling the precipitation totals “more or less unprecedented.” One location had tallied 22 inches by Monday night as the rain continued to come down, which his office referred to as “prodigious.”

“Some of the impacts we had were roads washed out,” Ottenweller said. “We even had a landslide ... basically the side of the mountain just gave way.”

Girdwood especially hard hit

Hardest-hit has been Girdwood, nestled in the Glacier Creek valley about 50 miles south of Anchorage, where the core of the atmospheric river blasted ashore. The quaint former gold mining turned ski resort town earned the nickname “Glacier City” for the waterway that runs through its heart. Over the weekend, that quiet creek became a raging, roiling river.

The silty, milky grayish water, fed by glaciers high the Chugach range, carried fallen trees swiftly downstream and swiped precious inches from one neighborhood’s backyard banks. Heavy rains started Friday night. By Sunday, at least a foot of the bank had collapsed.

Early Sunday, a culvert failed, exposing at least six feet of sewer line and a natural gas pipeline. The washout left emergency managers without access to Girdwood’s critical infrastructure, including the wastewater treatment plant, the garbage transfer station and a lot where all the road maintenance equipment is stored.

“Our big hole on Ruane Road was like a new tourist attraction,” joked Michelle Weston, Girdwood’s fire chief. “There were a lot of people coming out in the pouring rain, just to look at the hole.”

Unfortunately for Girdwood, a town heavily dependent on tourism, October is a slow, shoulder season before Alyeska ski resort opens and after summer tourism has long died down.

Toward the south end of town, up a steep hillside, roughly 20 houses stand along Echo Ridge Drive, ground zero for some of the worst impacts to residents. When daylight finally broke Sunday, after two straight days of heavy rain, the road itself looked like a braided stream.

“Next level” is how Alex Roberto described it. She said she had gone to bed with her window cracked “just to listen to the rain.” At 1 a.m., she awoke to the sound of heavy equipment.

“Echo Ridge basically went from a road and turned into a fast-flowing river,” she said. Crews worked all day Sunday to allow residents to access their homes temporarily. Several railroad tracks were also washed out.

The amount of rain that fell on the region not only smashed records, it obliterated them.

“It’s been moderate to heavy rain now for more than sixty consecutive hours,” said Alaska climatologist Rick Thoman. By midday Monday, Thoman, who works for the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy in Fairbanks, was using words such as “astounding” and “exciting.”

“What’s remarkable about this is just the absolute amounts of rain and the long duration,” he said.

Excessive snowfall

The exceptional amount of moisture has blasted higher terrain with snowfall. The snow has probably already topped 10 feet above 5,000 feet according to Thoman, with up to several feet more forecast.

The National Weather Service [had predicted up to 28 feet on Mount Marcus Baker](#), a 13,176-foot peak in the Chugach Mountains, about 75 miles east of Anchorage. Thoman said that was almost certainly an overestimate but that there’s no way to know for sure how much snow fell, since there aren’t any mountain gauges that high.

“It’s at a very remote area that’s accessible only by air,” Ottenweller said. “You can only get in there with a chartered aircraft or a private helicopter. Some people do climb that peak, so that’s why the forecast is looked at. It’s kind of like Denali ... totally remote and unexplored.”

The climate change connection

At the Portage Glacier visitor center, weather records date back to the early 1970s, but all of the top 10 wettest days on record have occurred since 2001 — a symptom of Alaska’s rapidly warming climate.

As the atmosphere warms, the can hold more water, translating to a greater frequency and intensity of extreme precipitation.

“In a previous climate, maybe this was a 1-in-multi-hundred-year event for Girdwood,” Thoman said. “In our warming atmosphere [and] warming oceans, this is still an extreme event, but the chances of this much rain over a few days goes up dramatically, so we like to say that our changing environment increases the chances that we’ll see these kinds of events — and not just in Alaska but around the world.”

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HEADLINE	11/02 Latin America nations marine reserve
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/02/four-latin-american-countries-join-protected-marine-reserves-to-create-mega-mpa
GIST	<p>Four Pacific-facing Latin American nations have committed to joining their marine reserves to form one interconnected area, creating one of the world’s richest pockets of ocean biodiversity.</p> <p>Panama, Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica announced on Tuesday the creation of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor (CMAR) initiative, which would both join and increase the size of their protected territorial waters to create a fishing-free corridor covering more than 500,000 sq km (200,000 sq miles) in one of the world’s most important migratory routes for sea turtles, whales, sharks and rays.</p> <p>The move comes amid growing clamour for action to protect rare marine species and commercial fish populations against foreign fishing fleets exploiting the region’s rich marine biodiversity, as well as to limit illegal, under-reported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by local fishing communities.</p> <p>The president of Colombia, Iván Duque, announced an additional 160,000 sq km of marine protected area on top of the country’s existing 120,000 sq km at Cop26 in Glasgow on Tuesday.</p> <p>The day before, Ecuador’s president, Guillermo Lasso, took the first step by announcing the expansion of the current 133,000 sq km Galápagos marine reserve by 60,000 sq km.</p>

“Just as all the world leaders here have called for action not words, I believe this is a concrete action on behalf of [Ecuador](#) that goes beyond any words we can say here,” Lasso told the Guardian after the announcement.

“This is a sovereign decision of the Ecuadorian government but I have to point out that it is the result of five months of dialogue, which we’ve held with small-scale and industrial fishermen. For that reason I don’t expect any problem of rejection or protest because it is a consensual decision,” he said.

Lasso added that the plan for a wider joined-up reserve was “an absolutely direct response of middle-income countries with a commitment to humanity” to the increased presence of industrial fishing fleets. He said the expansion involved one of the world’s largest debt swaps for conservation, but did not give any details or figures.

The expansion creates a “safe swimway” connecting Ecuadorian with Costa Rican waters, where “important endangered migratory species, such as sharks, whales, turtles and manta rays travel”, said Ecuador’s environment minister, Gustavo Manrique.

“In spite of the fact we’re a developing country, despite the fact we have [one of] the largest [fishing] fleets in the Pacific, we have decided to reduce the fishing effort,” Manrique told the Guardian.

“This is the new language of global conservation. Never have countries with connecting maritime borders joined together to create a public policy.”

This new Galápagos protected area would be split into two: a no-take zone of 30,000 sq km to the north-east of the Galápagos Islands connecting Ecuador’s waters with those of Costa Rica, along the underwater seamounts of the Cocos Ridge, a key migration route for ocean-going species. Another 30,000 sq km area is a no-longline fishing zone wrapping north-west around the existing Galápagos marine reserve.

Alex Hearn, a British marine biologist who has worked in the Galápagos Islands for two decades, said it was a step forward. “This is a moment to relish, but there’s a lot of work which needs to be done.”

Hearn said the eastern tropical Pacific was “one of the last bastions of what ocean biodiversity would look like in a pristine world”, and described the seas that connect the Galápagos, Malpelo, Cocos and Coiba islands as a living laboratory for scientific research.

“Just protecting the waters around them is not enough. There’s a connectivity between the areas and that’s what we need to protect,” he said.

Hearn noted that the populations of highly migratory species had been falling this century, among them turtles, rays and sharks, particularly the critically endangered hammerhead species that congregates to breed around the Galápagos’s Darwin and Colombia’s Malpelo islands.

In June, as part of the UK-led “30x30” initiative to secure at least 30% of the world’s ocean as protected marine areas by 2030, [Panama](#) more than quadrupled the Cordillera de Coiba marine protected area – from about 17,220 sq km to 98,230 sq km.

Max Bello, an ocean policy advisor with the NGO Mission Blue, said: “With this commitment, Latin America again consolidates its leadership in marine conservation, but more is needed. We are hoping to continue towards at least 30% of protection in all of the [maritime] countries.”

“A new era – to provide protection to species which know no frontiers – has been born,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/03 Europe record summer: global heating
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/03/europe-record-summer-global-heating-cop26

The heatwaves and wildfires that caused devastation in [Europe](#) this summer would not have happened without global heating, new analysis shows.

The summer of 2021 was the [hottest on record](#) in the continent, with average temperatures about 1C above normal. The elevated heat caused [wildfires](#) and [premature deaths](#).

Researchers have calculated how much more likely the climate crisis made the high temperatures. For almost all of the past 150 years, the expected frequency of a European summer as hot as 2021 was no higher than once every 10,000 years.

But since the 1990s, as carbon emissions continued to soar, the expected frequency has rocketed to reach once every three years.

The analysis is a stark reminder to the leaders meeting at the [Cop26 climate summit](#) in Glasgow that global heating is causing terrible damage to lives and livelihoods. If countries do not achieve drastic reductions in carbon emissions by 2030 and hit net zero by 2050, the record heat of 2021 will strike every year by the end of the century, the scientists say.

Despite the extraordinary increase in likelihood of record heat in recent years, Nikos Christidis at the Met Office, who led the analysis, said: "These kinds of results are no longer surprising. Climate change is already making our weather extremes more severe."

"Extreme events are the new norm," [said](#) Prof Petteri Taalas, the head of the UN World Meteorological Organization. A European temperature record of 48.8C was [set in Sicily](#) in August. "Cop26 is a make-or-break opportunity to put us back on track," Taalas said.

The analysis used 14 climate models and scores of model runs to calculate how frequently the record summer of 2021 is expected to occur in today's human-influenced climate, compared with a climate with no human influence.

The research analysed the period from June to August and covered all of Europe, as far east as Yekaterinburg in Russia.

For large stretches of the 20th century, the estimated frequency of such a hot summer in a world without climate change was more than one in 10,000 years. "This event was so rare, it was nearly impossible to calculate a probability," Christidis said.

The same scientific approach has shown clear links between global heating and other severe weather. The record-breaking [heatwave in the Siberian Arctic](#) in January and February 2020 was made at least 600 times more likely, while the [terrible floods in Germany](#) and Belgium in July were made up to nine times more likely.

Prof Peter Stott, also at the Met Office, said: "We can be more confident than we have ever been about linking extreme weather events to climate change. The science is clear that the faster we reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases, the more we can avoid the most severe impacts."

"The new study is another stark reminder of just what 1.2C [of global heating to date] means," said Friederike Otto, at Imperial College London, who conducted the [Siberian study](#). "I really do not want to imagine the summers we'd have at 2.7C." She said looking at large regions gives a stronger climate change signal than smaller areas.

Bob Ward, a policy director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change at the London School of Economics, said: "The study shows clearly that the severe intensity of this summer's heatwave was due to man-made climate change resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities."

	<p>“The cost to humans and wildlife was substantial, with heatwave conditions killing people across the continent, and the enhanced evaporation of higher temperatures turning forests into fuel for devastating wildfires.</p> <p>“These extreme temperature events in Europe will continue to increase in severity and frequency for at least the next 30 years, until the world reaches net zero emissions of greenhouse gases.”</p> <p>Other previous studies have shown an extreme heatwave in 2017 that saw deadly forest fires blazing in Portugal and Spain was made 10 times more likely by global warming. In Portugal, 64 people died. Previous work has also demonstrated floods in England and France – as far back as 2000 – were made significantly more likely by global heating.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Tap water: new contaminants found
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/03/us-tap-water-contaminants-discovery-radioactive-material-pesticides
GIST	<p>Water utilities and regulators in the US have identified 56 new contaminants in drinking water over the past two years, a list that includes dangerous substances linked to a range of health problems such as cancer, reproductive disruption, liver disease and much more.</p> <p>The revelation is part of an analysis of the nation’s water utilities’ contamination records by the Environmental Working Group, a clean water advocate that has now updated its database for the first time since 2019.</p> <p>It found that the jump is partly driven by newly identified PFAS, a toxic class of “forever chemicals” that are widely used across dozens of industries and are thought to be contaminating drinking water for more than 100 million people. Pesticides, water disinfectant byproducts and radioactive materials are among other substances identified by regulators.</p> <p>Though the new contaminant list is disturbing, it would be much longer if regulators and utilities were properly monitoring the nation’s water supply, said the EWG senior scientist Tasha Stoiber.</p> <p>“It speaks to the fact that we don’t have nearly strong enough regulations in place to protect drinking water, and the regulation process is much too slow,” she said. “We’re testing for things that are already in our drinking water after the fact ... and we’re not keeping pace with these chemicals.”</p> <p>The list includes some substances that have been in production and used for years, but are only now being monitored by regulators as their links to health problems become clear. Other contaminants include those that industry is only beginning to use in larger quantities.</p> <p>Many of the substances were identified as part of the Environmental Protection Agency’s unregulated contaminant monitoring rule (UMCR), which is one of the first steps in the regulation process. It tracks chemicals’ presence in some water systems and its aim is to provide the EPA with a picture of how widespread a chemical’s contamination is before new limits are established.</p> <p>Among other substances detected is HAA-9, a byproduct of the drinking water disinfection process. Regulators previously set limits for HAA-5, a contaminant in the same family that was found to cause health problems. Industry claimed HAA-9 was safe, but recent studies linked it to low birthrate, so the EPA is beginning to track it.</p> <p>However, setting limits can be a lengthy process, and the EPA has failed to set a new limit under the UMCR in the 20 years since the rule was implemented. The agency found what Stoiber characterized as “eye-opening” levels of PFAS compounds in 2013 yet is aiming to set water limits for just two kinds by next year.</p>

	<p>Other contaminants in the new list were detected by states that are moving to put stricter regulations in place for chemicals, like PFAS.</p> <p>In the meantime, there's little that people can do beyond educating themselves about which contaminants are in their water system, buying filters and advocating for stronger regulations. EWG's database allows users to search for contaminants in water systems by zip code, and it provides a guide on which chemicals water filters can remove.</p> <p>"Everyone can be educated," Stoiber said. "Contact the local utility, ask them questions about what they're doing ... and push for stronger regulations that protect people's health."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Police: new theory LAX jet-pack man
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/theory-mysterious-lax-jet-pack-man-released-police/story?id=80926583
GIST	<p>Following nearly two years of reported sightings of a man flying at relatively high altitudes around aircrafts landing at Los Angeles International Airport, the police department released a new theory -- there may not have been a man after all.</p> <p>A helicopter crew captured images of a life-sized balloon flying over Century City last November, near where earlier sightings had been reported, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.</p> <p>The balloon reportedly resembles the fictional character "Jack Skellington" from Tim Burton's 1993 movie "A Nightmare Before Christmas."</p> <p>The first reported sighting of a possible jetpack flier was made on Aug. 30, 2020, after two different commercial airline pilots reported seeing a man in a jet pack hovering near LAX, ABC News reported.</p> <p>The second report was made on Oct. 14, 2020, and the third was made on July 28, 2021, all in the same surrounding area as the first.</p> <p>Federal authorities said that none of the theories surrounding the sightings have been confirmed, and they are continuing to investigate the situation with the Federal Aviation Administration.</p> <p>"The FBI has worked closely with the FAA to investigate reported jetpack sightings in the Los Angeles area, none of which have been verified," the FBI said in a statement to ABC News on Tuesday. "One working theory is that pilots might have seen balloons."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Police: new laws prevented pursuit
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/police-say-new-laws-prevented-officers-from-pursuing-suspect-that-rammed-patrol-vehicles
GIST	<p>PUYALLUP, Wash. — Puyallup Police said they could not legally pursue a suspect vehicle even though it rammed their cars right in front of their eyes.</p> <p>They said the new police reform laws prevent it.</p> <p>Two patrol units were damaged as they tried to question the car prowler suspect in his car. Police said the suspect drove off in a hurry ramming their cars along the way. The officers were not hurt because they were not in their cars at the time, which they say is key to what they did.</p>

“The officers were not in the vehicles when the vehicles were rammed, therefore the crime did not rise to the level that would authorize us to pursue that vehicle under the new legislation,” said Capt. Jason Visnaw, Puyallup PD. He was asked, “Does that sound crazy to you?” Visnaw, “It’s the world we live in now. The legislators wrote and enacted this legislation. This is what we are bound by. It’s what we will do.”

State Sen. Jamie Pedersen (D-Seattle, 43rd Dist) was asked, “Are they correct?” Pedersen helped pass the legislation and said, “That is correct. We specifically prohibited departments from engaging in hot pursuits unless there had been a violent crime or a sex crime and they had probable cause to believe that the suspect was the person who committed that crime.”

Another of the legislation authors Rep. Jesse Johnson (D-Federal Way, 30th Dist) said, “We put these restrictions on vehicular pursuits in the law because pursuits are inherently dangerous to the officers, the suspect, and the public at large.”

Police arrested a woman who they believe was a passenger in the suspect car, a silver Ford Edge. Police said she was spotted several blocks away car prowling at an assisted living center.

Police reform advocates have long been saying that police underreacting in certain situations is an overreaction to the new laws.

“No, we’re not overreacting to the new legislation,” said Visnaw. “I think anyone who would think us not pursuing this vehicle because we want to prove a point about the new legislation and that we don’t want to pursue this vehicle that just rammed two of our cars simply for that reason, I think that’s silly.”

While the police pursuit limit portion of the bills is likely to stand, Sen. Pedersen said corrections are coming in the next legislative session in January. “There are pieces of the use of force bill and the police tactics bill that we’re going to be discussing and I suspect we will change by the end of the 2022 session.”

Such as enabling police to help involuntarily commit people who pose a danger to themselves or others and allowing for ‘less than lethal’ beanbag shotguns

“I would like to see the police be able to do their job,” said Fran Jennings whose Puyallup equipment store has been burglarized several times including Sunday when off-duty federal way police officer Donovan Heavener interrupted the crime and was shot and wounded. “They’re willing to do their job. I think they just have too many restrictions. There are too few rights for good guys and too many rights for the bad guys.”

Detectives were back out at the scene looking for evidence. They found the silver truck, but not the black one yet as the search for the suspects continues.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Copper thieves behind power outage
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/suspected-copper-wire-thieves-cause-large-power-outage-in-puyallup
GIST	<p>PUYALLUP, Wash. - Thousands of customers in Puyallup were in the dark because of vandalism overnight.</p> <p>Puyallup police said early Tuesday morning there was a large power outage in the downtown area, impacting several traffic signals.</p> <p>The damage happened before 11 p.m. Tuesday in the North Puyallup area around the 12300 Block of Valley Avenue East.</p> <p>Puget Sound Energy officials told FOX 13 News the outage was caused by suspected thieves who went after copper wire on a line.</p>

	<p>While cutting down the pole to get to the line, it fell on PSE's energized lines which caused the outage.</p> <p>More than 17,000 customers were affected by the outage.</p> <p>Nearly a dozen schools in the Puyallup School District had delayed starts because of the outage.</p> <p>Anyone who sees suspicious activity around power lines is asked to call and report it as soon as possible.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 NY largest cocaine bust in a decade
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2021/11/03/New-York-cocaine-seizure/3141635926373/
GIST	<p>Nov. 3 (UPI) -- Federal agents have busted a drug conspiracy to transport cocaine into New York, bringing charges against three people and seizing more than a ton of the narcotic, its largest such seizure for the state in more than a decade, authorities said.</p> <p>The Justice Department announced Tuesday that agents with the Drug Enforcement Agency seized more than 2,000 pounds of cocaine over two days in late September.</p> <p>Jorge Aponte-Guzman, 33, Nelson Agramonte-Minaya, 37, and Carlos Maisonet-Lopez, 32, were charged in an indictment unsealed Monday in a Manhattan federal court with conspiring to distribute and possess with intent to distribute at least 5 kilograms of cocaine, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison to a maximum of life.</p> <p>According to court documents, law enforcement agents Sept. 29 were on the lookout for a rental van in New Jersey driven by Aponte-Guzman.</p> <p>The document states officers watched the van drive from a loading dock in the state to an apparently abandoned residence where they saw Maisonet-Lopez approach the vehicle on foot and Agramonte-Minaya standing in a basement-level unit.</p> <p>The officers arrested the three suspects and searched the van, discovering shipping pallets and records stating they contained lawn rollers from Puerto Rico with a destination of the Bronx, New York.</p> <p>The basement-level unit appeared to be outfitted with power tools and furniture covered in plastic to unpack the lawn rollers, the document said.</p> <p>"Law enforcement officers cut open the 10 lawn rollers that were in the van and seized a total of 460 kilograms of cocaine," according to the charging document, which said the next day officers returned to the loading dock where there was a second shipment of lawn rollers containing the same amount of the illegal drug.</p> <p>DEA Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan said the seizure signifies the shifting drug landscape of New York as cocaine confiscations have risen more than 150% in the last year.</p> <p>"A multimillion-dollar storm of cocaine was seized before it could wreak havoc in the Northeast," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Multi-state drug distribution ring disrupted
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdwa/pr/sixteen-indicted-multi-state-drug-distribution-ring
GIST	<p>Seattle – A series of arrests over the last ten days has disrupted a multi-state methamphetamine and fentanyl distribution ring. The drugs were coming up from California and were being distributed in King, Pierce, Thurston, Lewis, Mason and Kitsap counties. The 18-month investigation revealed the drug trafficking organization was also distributing drugs to locations in the Southeastern United States including Florida, Arkansas and Tennessee.</p>

“This drug organization trafficked two of the deadliest substances we are seeing in our community – fentanyl and methamphetamine,” said U.S. Attorney Nick Brown. “Members of the ring tried to trade drugs for firearms – ones they could transport to Mexico – contributing to terrible violence south of the border. These arrests are a significant step for community safety.”

According to records filed in the case, the investigation began in February 2020. Various people working with law enforcement provided information regarding the drug distribution activities. Aware of some of the group’s trafficking, law enforcement seized 10 pounds of methamphetamine in a traffic stop on May 16, 2020. Another 44 pounds of meth were seized in a stop on April 2, 2021, and 83 pounds of methamphetamine and 20,000 fentanyl pills were seized in a traffic stop on September 28, 2021. Additionally, on August 17, 2021, law enforcement seized 22 pounds of methamphetamine that conspirators attempted to mail to Fiji.

The alleged leaders of the drug distribution ring, Jose Maldonado-Ramirez, 33, and his fiancé, Iris Amador-Garcia, 30, of Bellflower, California, were arrested October 28, 2021. During a search of the residence where Iris Amador-Garcia was living with her brother and co-conspirator, Mario Amador-Garcia, 31, and co-conspirator, Bayron Eberto Garcia-Perez, 33, agents seized a kilogram of fentanyl or heroin, 80,000 pills of suspected fentanyl, and 2 firearms. Eight additional firearms were seized at search locations in Washington and California. Four other conspirators were taken into custody last week including:

Amado Pedro Castillo, 59, Brooklyn, New York

Jose Nolberto Bernal, 28, Kent, WA

Fernando Alcides Lopez-Mendez, 37, Los Angeles, CA

Justino Cruz-Victorio, 34, Joshua Tree, CA

Today, law enforcement made additional arrests of the distribution network:

Joseph Troy Easton, 42, Bremerton, WA

Angelique Marie Easton, 51, Bremerton, WA

Curtis Robert Griffin, 42, Belfair, WA

Dwayne Douglas George, 60, Spanaway, WA

Douglas Bryan Healer, 47, Port Orchard, WA

Jerry Wayne Kohl, 59, Tacoma, WA

One additional defendant was arrested today with 2 pounds of methamphetamine, three rifles, and a shotgun. An additional four guns were recovered at other search locations. Defendant Healer engaged in an armed stand-off with law enforcement today. This afternoon he was taken into custody at his Port Orchard residence without incident.

“The objectives of this operation were to hold those accountable for the menace of illegal narcotics trafficking, and the violence associated with it, which has plagued our communities for far too long in the state of Washington and throughout the Pacific Northwest,” stated DEA Special Agent in Charge, Frank Tarentino. “The DEA and our partners are focused on the most dangerous criminals in Washington. Today’s successful operation should give members of the community a level of comfort in knowing these violent offenders, who live and walk among us, won’t be putting their lives in danger any longer.”

“These warrants represent the continued efforts of IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS:CI) to ensure the safety of our communities,” said IRS:CI acting Special Agent in Charge Adam Jobes. “We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners to stop the widespread harm these illicit substances cause our friends, families, and neighbors.”

The charges contained in the indictment are only allegations. A person is presumed innocent unless and until he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

These indictments are an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks. The investigation was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Seattle Field Division (SFD) Tacoma Resident Office (TRO) and Bremerton Police Department (BPD), with assistance from Tahoma Narcotics Enforcement (TNET); the Seattle, Puyallup, Auburn, Federal Way, Kent, Bonney Lake, Tacoma, and Lakewood Police Departments; the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office; Washington State Department of Corrections; Joint Narcotics Enforcement Team (JNET); Centralia and Chehalis Police Departments; Valley Narcotics Enforcement Team (VNET); and Washington State Patrol; Thurston Narcotics Team (TNT), Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office, and Mason County Sheriff’s Office; United States Postal Inspections Service (USPIS), Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) with support from Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA).

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Benjamin Diggs and C. Andrew Colasurdo.

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HEADLINE	11/02 Key witness against Colombia cop freed
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/key-witness-against-colombian-cop-behind-dea-leaks-sentenced/
GIST	<p>MIAMI (AP) — The key witness against a Colombian police captain who leaked sensitive information about U.S. anti-narcotics investigations has been given a sharply reduced sentence Tuesday for his help in a case that has highlighted concerns about the Drug Enforcement Administration’s operations overseas.</p> <p>Judge Robert Scola sided with federal prosecutors in Miami who found that Juan Carlos Dávila-Bonilla’s cooperation merited a 40% reduction from sentencing guidelines recommending a minimum 57 month sentence for obstruction of justice.</p> <p>Instead, the judge ordered he be freed immediately under supervised release after spending 33 months in custody since his January 2019 arrest in Colombia on a U.S. warrant.</p> <p>Dávila-Bonilla’s testimony helped convict Juan Pablo Mosquera, a once-rising star in Colombia’s police who headed an anti-narcotics squad in the city of Cali overseen by the DEA’s Sensitive Investigative Unit, the gold standard of its partnerships abroad.</p> <p>Mosquera, who pleaded guilty in the U.S. to two counts of obstructing justice, was charged with trying to sell information about what he thought was an impending narcotics indictment against an American who had ditched probation decades earlier and was believed to be living in Colombia.</p> <p>Mosquera’s police unit was one of many vetted by the DEA under a program meant to help conduct drug investigations in foreign countries where U.S. agents face more restrictions than local officers.</p> <p>The program has led to the arrests of hundreds of drug capos in more than 20 countries.</p>

But a scathing U.S. Inspector General report this summer blasted the DEA's leadership in Washington for failing to properly oversee its foreign law enforcement partners even in the aftermath of a string of well-publicized scandals.

The case against Mosquera arose from a tip that he was trying to sell information through his representative, Dávila-Bonilla, a previously convicted Colombian drug trafficker, to targets of U.S. law enforcement investigations.

When the DEA found out, it organized a sting in which it shared false information with Mosquera about an indictment out of Miami against an American fugitive identified in court papers as P.L.

Less than a week later, Dávila-Bonilla was recorded on a phone call with someone he thought was a drug-trafficking associate of P.L. but in reality was a DEA confidential source. Dávila-Bonilla told him that the Miami extradition request was imminent and that the American should leave Colombia

Prosecutor Joseph Schuster said that Dávila-Bonilla's role in the conspiracy was minor compared to that of Mosquera. And he said that Dávila-Bonilla had also helped with investigations against two other drug kingpins, neither of whom were identified by name. He said one of those had already been indicted and the other was under investigation by prosecutors in New York.

Also weighing in Dávila-Bonilla's favor was the fact that he has no previous criminal record in the U.S., although he has been convicted twice before for distributing cocaine in Germany and Italy.

"I'd like to say to this honorable judge and court how much I apologize for this mistake," Dávila-Bonilla said in brief remarks before Scola imposed the light sentence, adding that he hoped the court would give him an opportunity to "rebuild my life."

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HEADLINE	11/02 Paris: officers shoot man w/knife
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/man-knife-attack-after-refusing-wear-mask-shot-police-paris-1644859
GIST	<p>Security officers have opened fire at a knifeman who threatened them at a railway station in Paris after refusing to wear a mask.</p> <p>The incident began on Monday evening at Saint-Lazare station after a man was stopped for not wearing a mask and refusing to comply with officers, BFTV reported.</p> <p>The man is then alleged to have brandished a knife and charged at officers shouting "Allahu Akbar," before he was shot twice in the chest by authorities, according to French media.</p> <p>The man is said to be in a life-threatening condition following the incident, which took place at one of the busiest stations in Paris.</p> <p>The man was until now unknown to the intelligence services, local media reported.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Paris prosecutor's office told <i>Newsweek</i> that an investigation was opened on Tuesday into the counts of attempted voluntary homicide of a person entrusted with a public service mission, defending terrorism and violence with a weapon. The First District of judicial police are carrying out investigation, the spokesperson said.</p> <p>France's state-owned railway company SNCF said in a statement: "The two agents used their service weapon to defend and neutralize him.</p> <p>"The injured individual was taken care of by the emergency services."</p> <p>There have been a number of knife attacks on police officers in France over the last several months, many of them terrorism-related.</p>

	<p>In May, a radicalized French former prisoner on a watch list of potential terrorist threats stabbed a policewoman inside her station in western France and died after police shot them. Interior Minister Gérard Darmanin told reporters at the time that the suspect was flagged in 2016 for radicalization.</p> <p>In April, police administrative worker Stéphanie Monfermé, a mother of two, was stabbed in the stomach and throat outside the police station where she worked in Rambouillet, southwest of Paris. Her attacker was also shot dead by police. Officials described it as an Islamist terrorist attack.</p> <p>In 2019, an Islamist working in the Paris police headquarters killed three police officers and one civilian employee.</p> <p>Back in 2016, a Frenchman of Moroccan origin stabbed a police commander to death outside his home in Paris, and killed his partner, who also worked for the police.</p> <p>In July this year, French lawmakers adopted two controversial bills to fight terrorism following the spate of attacks. One law gives France's security services more tools to help them keep track of suspected terrorists, especially online. The other aims to combat extremist ideas in French society using a wide range of measures—including toughening conditions for home-schooling and giving the authorities power to shut down places of worship that are seen as allowing hateful or violent ideas.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Haiti gangs target schools, students
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/unicef-gangs-haiti-targeting-schools-students-80933654
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- UNICEF warned Tuesday that schools in Haiti are increasingly at the mercy of gangs, with children becoming targets of robbery or ransom.</p> <p>The agency said that at least seven schools in the capital of Port-au-Prince have been forced to pay unidentified gangs in exchange for security in the past two months and that additional institutions have been threatened.</p> <p>“More and more fear at school means less and less learning,” UNICEF said. “Gangs are rapidly turning temples of knowledge into theaters of violence.”</p> <p>The warning came a few days after authorities said gang members killed a university professor they had recently abducted. Patrice Derenoncourt worked at the Faculty of Social and Political Economics of the University Notre-Dame of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>In addition, U.S. and Haitian authorities are still trying to secure the release of 17 missionaries from a U.S. religious organization who were kidnapped Oct. 16 near the capital. The 16 Americans, one Canadian and their Haitian driver were abducted by the 400 Mawozo gang, whose leader has threatened to kill them if his demands are not met. There are five children in the group, including an 8-month-old.</p> <p>“While we wait on God to bring resolution to this very difficult and trying circumstance, we believe that God has heard and is hearing our prayers,” Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries said in a statement Tuesday.</p> <p>Haiti is struggling with a resurgence in gang-related kidnappings, which had diminished following the July 7 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and a magnitude-7.2 earthquake that struck southwestern Haiti in mid-August, killing more than 2,200 people.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/02 Police weep rescuing Australia girl
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australian-girl-rescued-weeks-man-arrested-80936742

GIST

CANBERRA, Australia -- Police smashed their way into a suburban house on Wednesday and rescued a 4-year-old girl whose disappearance from her family's camping tent on Australia's remote west coast more than two weeks ago both horrified and captivated the nation.

Officials wept with relief after seeing body camera video of a police officer scooping up the girl, Cleo Smith, and hearing her say, "My name is Cleo." A 36-year-old local man was arrested after the late-night raid at the house in the coastal town of Carnarvon, which followed a tip to police on Tuesday.

The girl was reunited with her mother Ellie Smith and stepfather Jake Gliddon soon after her rescue. "Our family is whole again," the mother said on social media.

Western Australia state Police Commissioner Chris Dawson would not detail what the girl had gone through. She is "as well as you can expect," Dawson said. "This has been an ordeal. I won't go into any more details, other than to say we're so thankful she's alive."

Dawson said "dogged, methodical police work" led to her being found.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison reacted from the United Arab Emirates on his way home from Scotland, thanking police for finding Cleo and supporting her family.

"It's every parent's worst nightmare. The fact that that nightmare has come to an end and our worst fears were not realized is just a huge relief, a moment for great joy," Morrison told reporters.

"This particular case, obviously, has captured the hearts of Australians as we felt such terrible sorrow for the family," he added.

Cleo's family lives in Carnarvon, a community of 5,000 people, and the girl had disappeared with her sleeping bag on the second day of a family camping trip at Blowholes Campground, 75 kilometers (47 miles) north of Carnarvon, on Oct. 16.

A massive land and sea search was initially mounted in the sparsely populated region on the assumption that she had wandered from the tent. But more evidence began to support an abduction.

A vehicle was reported speeding away from the area in the dark hours of the morning. A zipper on a flap of the tent compartment where Cleo and her sister were sleeping was too high for the girl to have reached.

Forensic scientists examined the exterior of the family's home to see if a predator had stalked Cleo and attempted to break in.

And a distraught Ellie Smith made emotional public appeals for information on her daughter's whereabouts that were broadcast across Australia.

New South Wales Police Commissioner Mick Fuller said Dawson told him he had broken down in tears when she was found.

Fuller had called across the country from Sydney on the east coast, to Perth in the west, to congratulate Dawson on the outcome.

"He broke down and cried, which for a veteran in policing, you rarely see that," Fuller told Sydney Radio 2GB. "It speaks volumes in terms of the amount of effort they put into finding her."

"Whilst we were all hoping and praying as the days went on, I think the chances of finding her alive were so slim," he added.

Dawson said body camera video of four police officers breaking into the house with a search warrant and finding the girl made him emotional.

“It’s a really joyous occasion. We don’t always get these sort of outcomes, and while we were very, very concerned, we didn’t lose hope,” Dawson said.

Western Australia Police Deputy Commissioner Col Blanch described seeing seasoned detectives “openly crying with relief.”

“We were ... looking for a needle in a haystack and we found it,” Blanch told Perth Radio 6PR.

“When she said, ‘My name is Cleo,’ I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house,” Blanch said, quoting the girl’s words to the police officer who picked her up in his arms.

“To see Cleo rescued this morning, I’m speechless,” Blanch added.

The state government had offered a 1 million Australian dollar (\$743,000) reward for information five days after her disappearance, but Blanch said the money was not expected to be claimed.

Police had received intelligence on Tuesday guiding them to the house, but the breakthrough was the result of investigators piecing evidence together, Blanch said.

“There were lots of things. There were car movements, there were phone movements, there were antecedents of people,” he said.

Carnarvon Shire President Eddie Jones said the local community would be “elated, thankful” when they heard the good news.

“I’m beyond relieved. The nightmare is now finally over for Cleo and her family,” Western Australian Premier Mark McGowan posted on social media.

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